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Bush decided to invade Iraq before diplomacy failed, says report

■ SPORTS / A21
Unheralded GMU stuns Connecticut, enters NCAA Final 4

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DOJ wants trial of 4 US Marines moved to Manila

■ ENTERTAINMENT / A21
'Pepot Artista,' 2 other RP films, competing in Singapore filmfest

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PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Tuesday, March 28, 2006 ★★ Vol. 21 / No. 118 www.inquirer.net

'Sari-sari' store by day, condom outlet by night

By Alex Pal
PDI Visayas Bureau

DAVAO, NEGROS OPEN-ed—in the daytime, Cinna Dragasco's sari-sari store sells candies, cigarettes, soap and sachets of shampoo. At

SARI-SARI, A3

Host of axed radio show cries gov't suppression

By Alissa Pupa

A HOST OF A RADIO PROGRAM IN DZRJ 90.3—he has claimed the "source relations" between the Jacinto family owners of the station and the family of President Macapagal-Arroyo was the reason his show was canceled.

Bernie Franco, host of "Buhay Manggagawa," which has been on the air since 1997, also said

HOST, A4

9 killed in Sulu explosion

Ramos supports signature campaign

By Christine O. Avendaño and Jerome Aning

THE ADMINISTRATION YESterday found an ally in former President Fidel Ramos in its campaign to collect 5 million signatures and push through with its plan to rewrite the Constitution over vehement opposition objections.

Ramos threw his support behind the signature campaign and said that, while the Supreme Court could better deal with the legal questions, "there is a higher court and that's the people themselves."

Chief Benjamin Abalos Sr. of the controversy-hounded Commission on Elections, some of whose officials have been linked to alleged vote-rigging to help President Macapagal-Arroyo's win in the 2004 polls, indicated yesterday his office was prepared to begin verifying the millions of signatures that administration backers said they had already collected.

Abalos made the statement after two senior officials in the Comelec's central office in Manila separately confirmed to reporters that groups identified with the Cha-cha (Charter change) movement had approached some election officers in provinces and towns and offered them money

RAMOS, A6

WEARING a mask and wielding a scythe, Crisostomo Cruz dramatizes a Lenten protest outside the Department of Justice to demand justice for victims of last month's stampede during the "Wowowee" game show anniversary celebration. AP PHOTO

20 others hurt; armed suspect held

By Ed General
PDI Mindanao Bureau
and Luige A. del Puerto
in Manila

JOLO, SULU—THE BLAST ripped through the Sulu Consumers Cooperative store shortly after the lunch break at 1:15 p.m. yesterday.

People rushed out of the grocery and dry goods store and, moments later, when the smoke cleared nine people lay dead—mostly store employees. More than 20 others were injured, including a year-old boy who lost an eye, according to the local Red Cross.

The injured, some in critical condition, were rushed to the Sulu General Hospital.

Senior Supt. Abiram Ajirim, provincial police director, said a young man had been arrested in connection with the bombing, but no details were disclosed. Police in Manila said the man had a .45-cal. pistol, an Icom radio and a remote control device.

Ajirim said the blast was so powerful it tore down the walls of the town's biggest store. "Half of the establishment is destroyed," he said.

The device was believed to have been planted in the luggage counter.

A 30-year-old woman, who identified herself only as Amina, said she dove under a parked tricycle when she heard the explosion.

"I did not know how I was able to do that. All I was thinking of was to stay

FOLLOW, A6

ABS-CBN opens settlement talks with victims

By Armand N. Nocum and Margaux C. Ortiz

LAWYERS FOR ABS-CBN YESTERDAY said the television network had initiated talks with 900 victims, including relatives of the 71 dead, to settle civil liabilities arising from the stampede last month during the first anniversary of its popular game show "Wowowee."

An NBI official, Ferdinand Lavin, said the criminal case against 12 ABS-CBN officials and five others in connection with the tragedy at the Philsports Arena in Pasig City on Feb. 6 could be dismissed if the victims agreed to an amicable settlement.

In moves showing that ABS-CBN is covering all flanks, its lawyers asked the Court of Appeals to issue a restraining order against the Department of Justice, accusing the DOJ of engaging in "institutional bias" in a "mad rush" to pin the blame on the TV giant.

During the second preliminary hearing on the criminal charges filed against the 17 respondents, the lawyers said talks with the victims and their relatives had begun on Thursday.

"Our clients have repeatedly said they are willing to settle all the claims and give justice to all concerned," said ABS-CBN lead counsel Steps Pano, a former justice undersecretary.

Pano later told reporters that the lawyers were set to talk on April 4 with Dante

ABS-CBN, A4

PMMA valedictorian Cadet First Class Zoilaika Mariano Callejo. ALAN MACEDONIO

After 186 years, woman leads PMMA cadets

By Allan Macatuno
PDI General Luzon Desk

SAN NARCISO, ZAMBALES—WOMAN ON top.

For the first time in its 186-year history, the state-dominated Philippine Merchant Marine Academy (PMMA) board here has a woman cadet let to top graduates.

Cadet First Class Zoilaika Mariano Callejo, 23, will lead more than 180 graduates in June, as the first woman to top the graduating class of one of Asia's oldest maritime institutions.

"Being the first woman cadet who will

AFTER, A7

GMA nears record of most ex-AFP appointees

Bunye: She's wielding power judiciously

By Jerry E. Esplanada
(Second of three parts)

SPECIAL REPORT

DURING HER FIRST TWO YEARS IN office alone, President Macapagal-Arroyo had already appointed more than 50 retired military officers to various civilian posts.

Today Mr Arroyo is close to breaking the record set by the Ramos administration (1992-98), which was responsible for naming more than 100 retired and active-duty military officers to government posts, including board seats in state-owned and -controlled corporations.

During President Corazon Aquino's term, more than 20 officers joined the civilian bureaucracy.

Nearly 30 ex-military officials did the same during the short-lived Estrada administration.

Among the current administration's latest recruits are Benjamin Defensor, former Armed Forces of the Philippines chief of staff, who was named antinarcotics czar, and Jose Calimlim, former AFP vice chief of staff, who was designated chief of the Subic Bay Freeport's antismuggling task force.

Other ex-AFP chiefs of staff like Diomedio Villanueva, Roy Cimatu, Dionisio Santiago, Narciso Abaya and

GMA NEARS, A4

TROUBLE BEFORE TAKEOFF
Officials inspect the damage after the gypsum board ceiling at the arrival area of the controversial Ninoy Aquino International Airport's Terminal 3 collapsed. The facility was scheduled for a "soft opening" on Friday. (Story on Page A1.)

A2
WEATHER FORECAST
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
Second FRONTPAGE
TUESDAY, MARCH 28, 2006

Naia 3 ceiling collapses, stops Friday test flights

By Nikko Dizon

THE CEILING OF PARTS OF THE recently completed Ninoy Aquino International Airport's brand new Terminal 3 even before the concourse could even officially open for passengers.

Yesterday, the ceiling's boards and other materials began falling at the arrival area of the modernized terminal, prompting yet again another delay in the airport's opening, which is "soft" now, which had been scheduled for March 31.

The ceiling collapse, which was first noticed by passengers at around 9 a.m., forced the cancellation of all test flights that were supposed to be conducted at the terminal Friday.

Only one of the two runways at the airport will be used for the test flights, which will be conducted by Philippine Airlines (PAL) and Cebu Pacific.

Ricardo Morales, general manager of the Manila International Airport Authority (MIAA), said the ceiling collapse was caused by water seepage from the roof.

Morales said the MIAA had already asked the contractor, Philippine International Air Terminals Co. (PIATCO), to repair the damaged portions of the ceiling

Cop exec sues Ping for libel

By Leila A. del Puerto and Philip C. Tubeza

THE POLICE OFFICIAL ACCUSED of manufacturing the passport of former Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano has filed a P1-million libel case against his accuser, Sen. Panfilo Lacson.

Senior Supt. Asher Dolina, chief of the Criminal Investigation and Detection Group-National Capital Region, filed the case in the Mandaluyong City Prosecutor's Office yesterday at 10 a.m.

Dolina said Lacson's accusations had affected his family, especially his children.

"I also have to protect not only myself, but also the (police) institution against what Lacson said. (He said) that I had connived with the three at the (Department of Foreign Affairs) and that I knew (the Dolina) because I was a former police chief of Pasay City."

Dolina, who is a lawyer, had headed the Pasay City police in 1998.

Dolina sued Lacson for P1 million in moral damages and another P1 million in exemplary damages and attorney's fees.

He said he filed two counts of libel because Lacson had accused him of manufacturing Garcillano's passport at least seven...count to December 2005 and then again last month after the Senate Armed ng Pilipinas, said Garcillano's passport did not conform to standards.

Yesterday, Lacson said he had a witness who could prove his claim that Dolina was the one who "delivered" the tampered passport to Garcillano before the ex-poll official appeared to Congress in December.

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ABS-CBN opens settlement talks with victims of stampede

An URGENT APPEAL to our Economic Managers, Congress, the Business Sector, and our People

April 17 is the deadline for the filing of income tax returns and payment of taxes.

Those who religiously pay their taxes are burdened by the additional taxes which were recently legislated. This is because MANY DO NOT PAY THEIR TAXES. And THOSE WHO DO, PAY VERY LITTLE OF WHAT THEY SHOULD. The result is unfairness and inequity.

THERE IS AN URGENT NEED:

1. For the business community to set the example by paying the correct taxes.
2. For both the Business Sector & Government to work together to EXPAND the tax base. It should NOT be the honest taxpayer alone that should carry the burden of paying taxes.
3. For CONGRESS to AMEND Section 110 (B) of the E-VAT Law which diminishes the competitiveness of our local manufacturers who have high imported and raw material and parts content.

   Under Section 110(B) of the EVAT Law, when the Output Tax paid exceeds 101%, ONLY 70% of the Output Tax can be claimed as input tax by business. This is unfair to business and therefore Section 110 (B) must be amended.

   On the other hand, retail and distribution outlets, whose profit margin is less than one (1) percent of their sales, may be forced to close their stores.

OTHER CONCERNS OF THE BUSINESS SECTOR:

1. Corporate Income Tax increase from 32% to 35%

   This is an additional tax burden to business. With 35% tax, the Philippines has one of the highest tax rates in the world, making the country less competitive in attracting investments.

2. The 5-year Amortization of Input Tax on Capital Equipment

   Section 110 (A) (2) states that the input VAT paid on capital equipment must be amortized monthly over a five-year period. This is an added burden to businesses who import capital equipment but are NOT granted tax exemption from payment of duties & VAT.

DETERMINED EFFORT BY ALL TO FIGHT GRAFT

The Business Sector and Our People must support the Economic Managers headed by DOF Secretary Gary Teves for them not to waver in their commitment to stop graft and corruption at both the BIR and Customs and improve their image of the past 60 years of being the most corrupt agencies.

Accordingly:

- The drive to go after and prosecute tax evaders and smugglers under the RATE (Run After Tax Evaders) and RATS (Run After The Smugglers) must be pursued thru a visible radio, print & TV campaign by the DOF as we approach the April 17 TAX Deadline for Filing Income Tax returns.
- The Bureau of Customs and the BIR must be fully automated using the latest technology. Only 40% of their transactions are computerized. The rest are done manually.

We commend, Hon. Herminio Teves, Vice-Chairman of the Ways & Means Committee & Sub-committee Chair of the Oversight committee where COPW was invited as reactor to ALL the consultations held at the BIR Office with 12 major industry groupings. Congressman Teves published his findings in the Philippine Star on February 20, 2006.

WE have more than ENOUGH LAWS.
The challenge is how to properly implement these laws down to the lowest levels of the bureaucracy nationwide.

WE SEEK THESE REFORMS:

- Implement ASAP, E.O. 482 requiring a single window for cargo clearance so that a document filed in other ASEAN countries should be the same document to be used here for customs valuation purposes.
- Link the DOF, SEC, LTO, Customs and the BIR in order to validate import duties & VAT paid, and to plug other loopholes.
- Implement BSP Circular No. 472. This mandates banks to require two documents - the Income Tax Return filed with the BIR, and the Financial Statement filed with the SEC, which is a public document - as a condition for loan approval.
- Local governments and the national government need to coordinate and cooperate with each other to computerize a common database of taxpayers' transfer certificates of title (TCTs) for greater transparency and more efficient revenue collection.
- Accelerate the setting of standards for tax compliance per industry. This can be done by benchmarking 200 taxpayers from each industry based on their gross sales, net VAT, income tax paid, and profit margin. Revenue Memorandum Order 4-2006 provides guidelines to effect standardization.
- All CPAs must be accredited. Rules covering their practice must be established nationwide.

MEANWHILE, the COPW and the Office of the President are ONE in lowering the prices of basic commodities for our people in the depressed areas and the low middle class with her program to lower the prices of sugar, rice, cooking oil, generic medicine, LPG and increasing the number of rolling stores by 50%.

The effective collection of taxes and duties combined with responsible government spending will fast-track the government's economic reform programs, especially those that will help improve the lives of the marginalized sector and the lower middle class. In the end, everybody pays less but gets more in better services.

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Story continues on A4

Attorney of the Witnesses Against Crime and Corruption (AWCC), which is helping the victims.

Asked about a possible settlement, Paez replied that that would depend on the outcome of the discussions.

Unseemly haste

In its 46-page suit against the justice department, ABS-CBN said its officials "were made the easy targets in the hasty quest for somebody to blame."

It said Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez and his department "proceeded with unseemly haste in conducting so-called investigations to their end result to set up a supposed basis for criminal prosecution."

"The unfavorable outcome of the multi-consolidated and mere preliminary investigation has already been predetermined and the results are unseemly thrived to satisfy a finding of supposed probable cause for the filing of a criminal complaint against the petitioners," it said.

Paez said he chose "to no mind any chance of being accorded a fair and impartial preliminary investigation."

He said the DOJ "has plainly overstepped the bounds of its authority and has permanently disqualified itself from conducting a preliminary investigation."

The petitioners in the suit were sued with officials Ms. Rossini Santos Cordero, Ma. Socorro V. Dames, Marilou Alvarado, Cynthia Lagat, Mardy Brown, Harold Jesus Nava, Rodney Malaran, Francisco Rivera, Mel Feliciano and Jess Owen Davis.

State Prosecutor Leo Dacera agreed to defer the preliminary investigation until April 5, after ABS-CBN lawyers had informally informed the panel of their suit in the Court of Appeals.

Lorie Mil Ramos, a Capital Region consumer officer, said the prosecution would definitely be affected if the respondents would convince the victims to withdraw their criminal complaints.

"Based on the reactions of the victims who attended the preliminary investigation at the Department of Justice, it appears that they are hoping that the network officials would talk to them regarding some form of public settlement," he told reporters yesterday.

Lorie said the victims cheered and clapped when Paez brought up the possibility of the network entering into a settlement with them.

"Because most of the victims are unemployed, they would be more than willing to talk things out with ABS-CBN to get financial assistance instead of spending more money on the already strained economy at the DOJ," Lorie said.

He added that once the victims decided to withdraw their complaints, the prosecutors would file the appropriate motion to dismiss the case.

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9 killed in Sulu explosion; 20 others hurt

Continued from A1

many been hurt," said Amina, who suffered hi same.

Lookers-with rescuers

From underneath the wreckage, victims told the nine people running to all directions, some of them shouting and crying as bursts of gunfire rang out. Lisalin explained that people here, including policemen, flee their posts to the air during emergencies to avoid casualties.

Dr. Ambil Sadtar of the Red Cross said that when volunteer workers arrived at the scene shortly after the incident, they found mangled bodies strewn near the entrance.

As they were recovering the dead and the injured, he said confidential reports rushed from the scene, emptying the multi-cop towers and handing off goods.

A Philippine National Police spokesperson said he could not say whether terrorists were involved.

"It would be premature to say so at this time," Senior Supt. Samuel Bagcilan said.

He said US bomb experts were helping determine the type of device used. The investigation is part of the large contingent of US troops on a humanitarian mission in Jolo.

Family feud?

It was the second bombing incident in Jolo this year. On Feb. 10, a man was killed and 23 others were wounded in an explosion in a cinderella fair.

The island is a stronghold of the Abu Sayyaf, which has been linked to the Jemaah Islamiyah, Osama bin Laden's fund-based Asian arm.

The Moro National Liberation Front also enjoys a big influence in Jolo proper, a police officer said, speaking on background. The group did not normally launch attacks in the town, fearing their own relatives could be hurt.

The Abu Sayyaf has little or no access to the town, hoping to move on the outskirts...Peaceful and tedious.

The officer said this Sayyaf attacks had previously been directed at government troops.

"It might be a family feud. We'll be looking into who were there in the respective... That's the best possibility," the officer said.

Abu recruits

In Gumbaz City the chief of police of the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao said now also Sayyaf recruits might be responsible for the Jolo attack.

"There are traces of ASG (terror attacks, they are our prime suspects," Chief Supt. Ahmad Mamsa-Ilala told the Inquirer. But he said the police were not discounting other groups.

ARMM Gov. Zaldy Ampatuan directed the police in Gad track the investigation team and the regional ARMM Social Welfare Secretary Ruby Sahali to address the immediate needs of the survivors and the relatives of those who died. With reports from Julie S. Alipala and Edson Fernandez, *PhilMindanao Bureau*

GMA nears record of most ex-AFP appointees

Continued from A1

Angelo Reyes had also crossed over to the bureaucracy.

Six big deal, said Benjamin Defensor. Retired military officers have become a ubiquitous presence in the bureaucracy in many parts of the world.

"That's the current trend," the brother of Sec. Mirriam Defensor-Santiago asserted.

"Why close the door to ex-civil. they're good." Teves's reasoning: strong with moving along and making the world better. Today's breed of military officers are well-educated, well-trained, with very high leadership and management skills. They're armed with combat experience and lessons learned from many years of training and honorably serving the country."

Underpinning them in any field won't be easy," Defensor told the Inquirer.

Walk in the park

With a self-assured demeanor, Defensor said he was "very qualified to run the audiences (subbers or any civilian agency for that matter."

"It will be the park, if you ask me," he quipped. "But if there's somebody in the bureaucracy who can do my job better, I'm very willing to give way peacefully."

The practice is "not entirely new 50s also a prerogative of the President," said Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, who concurs more than 230 government agencies.

Head whenever the President makes these choices, nobody should question it," Ermita, a former Cabinet member, defense secretary and Batangas governorship, pointed out in a phone interview.

Prerogative

Presidential prerogative! "Here, but it should be a prerogative in a point. One that is subject to limit or government rules," said Raimundo Domingo, former chairman of the Presidential Anti-Graft Commission and the Commission on Audit.

Mr. lawyer's chief of staff, Michael Defensor, credited the practice for what he called "outstanding administration co-

DAVID

"I've always held the same views," Bro. Tomas told the Inquirer.

Chairperson as was the letter from "government should do something about this evening over practice" and that "civilian and military personnel should retire at the same time so that nobody crosses track."

Bro. Tomas said the retirement age for civilians (which is 65) or raise the retirement age for those in the military (which is 56)," Bro. Tomas said.

Like the labor secretary, current CSC Chair Karina Constantino-David expressed the same concerns over the perceived increase in the numbers of retired military and police officials appointed to key government posts.

"Precisely how many of these are in government is not clear," Carolina Varela, a political science professor at the University of the Philippines, wrote in the UP publication "Public Policy."

Hernandez, president of the Independent think tank Institute for Strategic and Development Studies, said "it's not exactly an obscure officer being chosen to be civilian bureaucracy," she said.

Do something

Eleven years later, Bro. Tomas said her views "have not changed."

Samuel Bagcilan said.

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Widening circle

Making the same observation, Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr. noted the "widening circle of military people in civilian offices these days."

"Gloria (Ms Arroyo) continues to surround herself with people with whom she has high comfort, likely one of her strategies in strengthening her hold on power," Pimentel said.

Partido ng Manggagawa party-list Rep. Renato Magtubo observed "a clear pattern in the employment of officers in key areas in the civilian bureaucracy."

"A reward for services rendered," according to Magtubo. "Not really a street-wise scenario, but the current administration seems bent on involving the military in almost everything, including the police. That's scary."

Akbayan party-list Rep. Loretta Ann Rosales described as "terrible" the changes of "ex-military officers with mind-sets that are different from those in the civilian bureaucracy being assigned to key government posts and climbing of military ranks into in people's problems."

The practice, "now subject to abuse by those in power, should be scrutinized, if not totally stopped," Rosales said.

Good and bad

Like everyone else, retired military officers have good and bad points, said Sen. Manuel "Manny" Villar Jr. first Manuel "Mar" ROXAS II.

"They say those in the military have a different mind-set, people who are not sensitive to social issues. But they're considered very skilled when you talk about skills like loyalty, discipline, obedience and leadership," Roxas said.

But he said he did not believe that certain government posts should be the "exclusive reserve" of military people.

"Overpopulating the bureaucracy with too many military minds will be a big mistake. Talking to a few outstanding ones may be a good idea," he said. "It's all in the balance, really."

Sensitive issue

Hernandez, who had served in the Davide Commission that probed the failed military coup of 1989 and the Feliciano Commission that looked into the 2003 Oakwood mutiny, called the continued appointment of ex-AFP officers a politically sensitive issue for several reasons:

- The widespread feeling among military officers that they are being treated as second-class citizens in a country they have served so well.
- Military officers believe that either they retire they can overcome to the civilian field and, if qualified, should be eligible to serve the country in a civilian capacity.
- There's the civilian perception that appointing retired officers to key government posts prevents equally qualified civilians from occupying the same positions which they had been singularly prepared.

Given the country's experience under martial law, it is easy to understand the public's concern about the return of authoritarian rule with the increase in the number of military retirees appointed to key posts close to government.

- Another perception among civilians is that even after retirement, military officers continue to be identified professionally, doctrinally and emotionally with the military.
- The so-called military mind-set, said to be authoritarian and averse to debate, ran that prides quick and cost-efficient solutions and is basically unsuited to democracy, which separates the military from the rest of society. If these with this mind-set dominate the governing elite, democratization will likely suffer.

Boundaries blurred

How, "the military performs defense functions and the civilian authority governs society. When these institutional boundaries become blurred, civilian control tends to decrease and erode while the influence and political power of the military are increased and consolidated," Hernandez said.

"Those who fear the further militarization of the government may have serious misgivings about electing another retired military officer to the presidency as he may similarly extrapolate the government with military retirees," she said.

Pimentel also said "giving retired military officers a stake in the preservation of the constitutional order by making them powerholders can enhance their support for that order."

Public reaction

Hernandez said strong public reaction to the appointment of retired military officers to key government posts may not be enough to stop the practice because the appointing power is given that it is not inappropriate in specific retired officers.

"What is required to limit the practice is to adopt a policy that restricts, whether from the military or civilian bureaucracies, should no longer be eligible for reappointment to government."

"This would unclog the promotion channels and enable bright, young, able and energetic civil servants to move forward and in the process, help professionalize civilian bureaucracy that can provide the consistency and continuity of policies, regardless of the vicissitudes and uncertainties of politics," she said.

In a paper titled "The new Soldiers," Michael Shea in Politics and the Bureaucracy," Jose mulet Glenda Gloria wrote that "for so long as the military has been political transitions, for so long as there are insurgencies and coup attempts, the military will remain the core institution that separates the military from the rest of society. If those with this mind-set dominate the governing elite, democratization will likely suffer.

Boundaries blurred

How, "the military performs defense functions and the civilian authority governs society. When these institutional boundaries become blurred, civilian control tends to decrease and erode

Bunye: President is wielding power judiciously

Continued from A1

first installment of a three-part business special report, which will be largely based on an interview with Civil Service Commission Chair Karina Constantino-David conducted on Nov. 17, 2005.

Bunye did not address the specific issue cited in the report, instead saying he was given a new view on how the complaints were handled.

"The President's power to hire and fire functionaries in the executive branch has been exercised judiciously by the public interest and she has been sensitive to the public pulse in the case of some controversial appointments that were rectified," he said.

To appease critics, Bunye observed the public that the government must continue to uphold clean governance, professionalism in the service, purge the misfits and undesirables, and make sure the conduct of officials are unanimously above board."

No reason given

Palace officials have not been too eager to answer questions on how the President chooses her appointees, preferring instead to give the standard reply that the choices were the President's sole prerogative.

At the Kapihan sa Maynila forum, Ermita said that when she was social welfare secretary, she was allowed four assistant secretaries, but a BIR) was added during her tenure.

She said Malacañang had informed her of the new appointment through a letter and did not explain why another post was created.

"There was no reason given. It was just announced," said Soliman, a member of the Black and White Movement, a group seeking the Arroyo's ouster.

The salary of the appointee came from Malacañang, but the funds for his office equipment came from the department's, Soliman said.

Despite her having three undersecretaries at the DSWD, Soliman added, a fourth was appointed to the department in 2002.

Administrative Code

Under the Administrative Code of 1987, the social welfare secretary shall be assisted by two undersecretaries and three assistant secretaries at most.

Soliman said the number of undersecretaries and assistant secretaries in other departments was limited as well.

"The appointing powers of the President must be reviewed," she said. "It must be limited to [appointing] undersecretaries."

Soliman said appointing people to government posts as a form of political reassurance was dangerous to the country's institutions.

"If the best persons will not satisfy workers, they will be corrupted and pressurized if they are being used for political survival," she said.

Soliman, along with nine other administration officials, resigned in July last year amid allegations that the President had cheated in the 2004 elections.

The group, known collectively as the "Hyatt 10," had called on Mrs Arroyo to vacate her post.

Beyond question

Coming to the defense of Ms Arroyo, two congressmen said the President's exercise of her "prerogative" to appoint government officials could not be questioned by the Civil Service Commission.

Rep. Eduardo Ermita (2PC, Leyte), a member of the Commission on Appointments, deplored David's disclosure that the Arroyo administration had been creating an bureaucracy like its own employees' agency.

Whose questioned the timing of David's "attack" on the President's exercise of her appointing power, saying the adverse remarks followed the arrest of her husband Randy Jose exactly when the country was placed under a state of emergency.

David called up the lessons yesterday to point out that she was interviewed for the special report long before she helped engineer the coup attempt last month and the arrest of her husband.

Rep. Benasing Macaraeg (NPC, Lanao del Sur), vice chair of the House committee on national defense and security, said it is within the rights of the presidential prerogative to appoint government executives "is beyond the CSC to question."

"The herself admitted that, legally, the President has done nothing wrong. So what's the beef?" said Macaraeg.

Surprising

He said the presidential appointments that could be subject of scrutiny through the Commission on Appointments were limited to Cabinet level posts, cabinets and generals of the Armed Forces and high positions in the Department of Foreign Affairs.

The CSC chair's criticisms of the President was surprising. If she has some objections to some appointments, she would have raised these directly with the President," said Macaraeg.

Others said the CA members had been meticulous in challenging the qualifications of presidential appointees to "make sure that only the best and brightest will make it to appointive posts so as not to compromise the quality of our services to the public."

Insulate bureaucracy

The two lawmakers called on David to consider resigning.

"If David is a professional in government, the intention is not to cause destabilization, but to ensure the insulation of the bureaucracy from politics," she said. *Reports from Ed C. Gubaan-agan Jr., Lyle R. Salaverria and Michael Lim-Ibay*

Corrections

IN THE MARCH 21 ISSUE, a story on Page A3—"ULTRA STEELPEOP. ARS-CIDS lawyers accuse DOJ of prejudging case"—misspelled the name of an ARS-CIDS lawyer and his last name is more problem. The correct name of the lawyer is Regalo-Pano. He was a just in—not London—undersecretary.

* * *

IN THE MARCH 22 ISSUE, a photo caption on Page A7 misstated the name of a descendant of Dr. Jose Rizal. The correct name of Rizal's descendant is Rosalinda Lopez Rosing—not Rosalinda Lopez Rizal.

* * *

Readers may send their requests for corrections of factual errors appearing in the City Desk, Philippine Daily Inquirer, 5th Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Makati-Ayala Street, Makati City; fax this: 897-47-03-90; e-mail: inquirer@inquirer.com.ph.

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After 186 years, woman leads PMMA graduating cadets

from page 8

graduate in No. 1 in the history of the academy is something to be proud of," Calilip told the learners.

For hundred and more years, she began, "the hundred part was shadow the cannon's protection period in my first year here. (That said when we were being transformed from civilians to midshipmen," she said.

Like other cadets, Calilan had to undergo physical training which tested her stamina and patience.

The academy established in 1820, has a quasi-military training program that prepares its cadets to be merchant marine officers as shipboard and shore-based port users in compliance with global requirements of the international maritime industry.

Equal treatment

"Men or women—are [are] all treated equally," Calilip said. "It's not easy being a [female] cadet, one has to go with [male] cadets in everything and it takes a lot of guts to be satisfied."

The PMMA has opened its doors to female applicants in 1997 and has been producing multilingual graduates.

During her early years at the academy, Calilip experienced discrimination, refusing how male cadets looked down on her and doubted her competence for the seafaring.

She divulged that off and promised herself that she would not only survive, she would excel in the academy.

"There were 500 of us when we entered the academy four years ago, but around 200 stayed on," Calilip noted.

Navy pilot

She is the eldest among three children of Rodolfo and Rebel Calilip, both public school teachers in Antique.

Calilip's trial studying accounting at the University of the Philippines in Iloilo but dreamed of becoming a Navy pilot. Inspired to pursue her dreams by relatives who were either Scout Rangers or merchant marine officers, she decided to enter the PMMA.

She became a prominent honor student, topping her classes during her early years in the academy.

Calilan went on board for the first time during her third year undergoing practical training on the SS Capo Nick, a Bottagona vessel with an Italian paramilan.

"Our mate was purely European countries—from Spain, Italy, Slovenia, Croatia, Bulgaria to Hungary, so we stayed on the upper part of the Earth Break," she said.

She was able to save money from her allowance which she used in shopping on board

Ramos supports signature campaign

From page A1

by each verified signature.

P5 per verified signature

One source said accreditation officers tasked supposed to the head office that poll officials were being offered P5 per signature.

Dan Gonzalez, official in Rizal province reported to her boss Garcillano that he was submitted to his office and he was practically being bombarded with text messages, his only source said.

Mr. Arroyo is campaigning to amend the Constitution to enable the country to shift from a presidential to a parliamentary government—a political maneuver her critics said she was resorting to so she could avoid being impeached and survive the series of scandals plaguing her presidency.

Speaking to reporters, Ramos said Malacañang should not try to deny it had a fund to the signature campaign—called a people's initiative—because to do so would "not be believable."

He said the people's initiative should be questioned to the Supreme Court as early as possible.

"The earlier they file it, the better, so that no useless exercises will be undertaken if the Supreme Court rules against it," he said.

Saying he had been advocating Charter change for 22 years now, Ramos said he hoped "that constitutional change would take place ... substitute it's a people's initiative or a senate constituent assembly."

"We should not risk again, as we are still making, the interventions of the shared forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police," he said.

He said legal experts were divided on the legality of a people's initiative to effect Charter change.

'Go ahead'

He said he believed that people, more of a people's initiative in the House "are very confident that this is the proper procedure to follow."

"My opinion ... is for them to go ahead," Ramos said.

The former President did not see anything wrong with the use of the taxpayers in gathering signatures because, after all, the "political, economic, cultural, local and educational issues are all responsibilities of our organizations of government at the grassroots."

Ramos said proponents of the people's initiative should explain Charter change properly, adding it would be a "deception" if they let the people sign without understanding what it was all about.

Cornelio can't rule

The former President expressed hope that senators opposed to Cha-cha would "see it in terms of strategic objectives of our country."

"Not see now being seen on the outside as re-ingratiated and even troublesome, quarrelsome convey to what kind of image is that in the international community?" Ramos said.

But senators said that even if all senators gathered the required signatures to push a people's initiative forward, any petition for constitutional amendment should be dismissed outright by the Comelec.

Senate President Franklin Drilon said the Comelec had no jurisdiction to entertain, much less rule, on any such petition since the Supreme Court already ruled that the law was inadequate to push such an initiative.

"The Comelec has no jurisdiction to even entertain such petition because they are bound by the ruling of the Supreme Court that Congress has to push for a people's initiative to amend the Constitution," he said in an interview.

'Conceived in sin'

"They should dismiss these petitions outright because they violate the rights of the people because they have no jurisdiction to receive the petition," Drilon added.

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said filing such a petition with the Comelec would not validate a people's initiative conducted without any enabling law.

"An illegal act can't ripen into something that is legal. So now, to how many petitions they file, how many signatures they obtain, it validated because the origin of it having been conceived in sin, born in sin and stayed (table) no matter what they try to do," he told reporters.

The Iglesia ng Bayan Movement has claimed some four million have signed the petition support-

Con-ass proposal dead, says Drilon

By Norman Bordadora and TJ Burgonio
INQUIRER ALLIES

SINAGKAISANG ALLIES CALL-ing for constitutional change have dashed their strategy to endorsing a people's initiative because they know their proposed constituent assembly is dead in the water, opposition lawmakers said yesterday.

"I think con-ass is dead," Senate President Franklin Drilon said, pointing out that Speaker Jose de Venecia and his allies had failed to gather the necessary signatures to support a resolution to amend the Charter through con-ass.

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. continued that the opposition in the House already had at least 80 signatures in its resolution opposing the De Venecia-led con-ass option.

With 80 signatures from among the 226 members of the House, the opposition appears to have foiled the Team Unity-Arroyo's bid to gather at least 195 signatures from congressmen to make members Congress into an assembly that would review the Charter.

"We're not out target. We have 80, that if you add that to the 23 senators who passed a similar resolution, it would be impossible to meet the required vote of three-fourths of Congress voting as one," Pimentel revealed.

In a news conference, Representative Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo said the push to gather millions of signatures from communities supporting a people's initiative to change the Constitution does have been ignored by, and by the House of the administration congressmen to win approval of their resolution favoring a con-ass.

House Majority Leader Prospero Pichay also expressed doubts the majority circuits had the 50 signatures.

"The administration has already lost 100 as of last count and we are confident we will get the majority before we go on recess on April 6. But until 13 more and we hope to get it in the next few days," Rogelio said.

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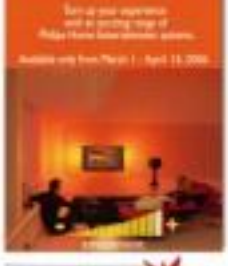

Host of axed radio show cries gov't suppression

From page A1

the cancellation was part of efforts to silence criticism of the Arroyo administration.

"ERC used Bobby Maquiling because we refused to become ... an instrument ... and mouthpiece of Malacañang," Ramos told the Inquirer. "The suppression of media and attempts to limit free speech that is critical to this administration is the reason (my show was cancelled). We don't see any other reason."

The station's financial comptroller, Erlinda Legaspi, gave a different explanation.

"The real reason why the program was canceled was because their contract was not renewed. Pinapalitan nila ang time. (They are swapping the hours)," she said.

Asked why the contract was not renewed, Legaspi said: "I have no comment about that."

The Inquirer called Radio station Ramon Jacinto, the radio station, but was told he was out of his office. The Internet asked for a comment.

Program executive director Jesley Arugay suspected the contract's cancellation was "directly related to the crackdown on progressive workers' organizations and critics of Ms Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo."

"The station seems to cast simple business relationships in political roundpoints," said Arugay.

According to Ramos, the first order of business was a visit of Fort Bonifacio Jose Miguel Arroyo.

"So there was probably pressure on (Lt. Gen. Efren) Abu (Presidential) Protection No. (1)? to make sure all the roundtable would not get out to the public," Ramos alleged.

He added: "Although IP 1167 or the code of national conscience and ethics for the press, the suppression of progressive and critical media organizations and personnel continues. Apparently, the current administration continues to silence those who oppose and criticize her. We are peaceful and disagreement should not be used as an instrument of denying the workers a venue to air their causes, issues and sentiments."

He said that as far back as July 2005, Dr. Gilbert Asuncion told him and his colleagues Malacañang's bid to gather at least 195 signatures from congressmen to members Congress into an assembly that would review the Charter.

"We're not out target. We have 80, that if you add that to the 23 senators who passed a similar resolution, it would be impossible to meet the required vote of three-fourths of Congress voting as one," Pimentel revealed.

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House Majority Leader Prospero Pichay also expressed doubts the majority circuits had the 50 signatures.

"The administration has already lost 100 as of last count and we are confident we will get the majority before we go on recess on April 6. But until 13 more and we hope to get it in the next few days," Rogelio said.

Last show

Ramos said the program still had up to March 31 to run, based on the quarterly contract. He was later told the program's last taping date would be March 26.

"Para bukas na gat ulf the ng, we got text messages this month saying we (the hosts) and our panel should avoid scheduling President issues, but we are an advocacy program focused on legislative issues. If there are issues that affect labourers, like the EPIRA and Charter change, we criticize them," Ramos said.

Ramos also wanted to reassure media by the station management that it had the prerogative to cancel their program.

2nd to fall

"Management says it's their prerogative to cancel programs that are not commercially. So that means issues like wage increases and labourers issues and bills are not commercial for them. But it's commercial for all," Ramos said.

"Bobo Marquiquiquez" was the second program taken off the air on dzRJ in recent weeks.

The social-crusading "Tiglauan sa Bayan" host Ito Mendoza went on dzRJ hours after Mr Arroyo declared a state of national emergency on Feb. 24.

'Sari-sari' store by day, condom outlet by night

From page A1

night...It includes open and sells other stuff.

A typical midwifery customer, usually a woman, heads to the back door, hands over P2.50 and whispers: "Pamilya ko (a member of my family)."

Barrera hands her condoms.

The store in Poblacion District 3 is this town doesn't even have a name. Barrera, the owner, is a barangay health worker and runs her sari-sari as a window of contraception as a way of helping her poor community.

She has other contraceptives, too, and those are counterpoints found outside her store, along with their respective prices.

"It's important to keep condom small because it's difficult to raise a big family these days," Barrera told reporters who visited her store last week.

Her store is one of the 63 community-based abstinence (CBA) outlets for contraceptives spread throughout nine coastal barangays of Lincoln. The stores have blossomed since the municipal government supported the Integrated Population and Coastal Resources Management Initiative (Ipopcorm).

Feeding the population

Mayor Rodrigo Abainza embraced the program after seeing how the town's fast-growing population had taken a toll on its natural resources. He was committed to managing family size in the community to ensure sustainability in the long haul.

Abainza said he decided to adopt the program after he noticed that the size of families along the coastal barangays—an average of six people per household—was bigger than those of families living in other areas.

Also, families living along the coast had a growth rate of 7.4 percent, in contrast to the 2.6 percent for the rest of the country, and the 2.2 percent for the previous.

"This has largely contributed to overfishing as a result of the reduced seed source which needed to be addressed to prevent further damage to the marine resources," Abainza explained.

Family planning

He said that through this integrated population and coastal resource management program, the quality of life of families in the coastal communities had improved. And with less pressure on the coastal ecosystem, the people have been assured of food security.

The major firm enlisted volunteers from the youth and married couples. They were trained by Ipopcorm, the Silliman University Angelo King Center for Research and Environmental Management and the Marine Class of the Silliman Biological Center Foundation Inc. to help educate their peers on the advantages of population and coastal resource management.

"I was also aware of the huge influence of the Roman Catholic Church, of which I am a member, to [visit my] parish priest. Perhaps, we both have the same commitments and we can not be fighting. Please take care of their spirit. I'll take care of their body and their basic needs," Abainza recalled.

Few people, more fish

To date, the population fiscal of the local government unit has been proceeding smoothly.

Since the Ipopcorm program was introduced in 2001, the population in the nine coastal barangays, based on an actual head count of residents, dropped to negative .23 percent in 2005. There were, however, no immediate figures on the actual number of childbirths in the three-year period.

Marine sanctuary

Danao also established a marine sanctuary to allow fish and other marine resources to breed and grow in order to replenish the depleted fish stocks of the town.

Fishermen have complained that their fish catch was getting smaller and smaller, and they had to paddle farther from shore just to be able to catch enough for their families' daily needs. Barely two years after the establishment of the marine sanctuary, the fishermen reported increased harvests.

Harden Jimenez, chair of the Danao Bantay Dagat association, said that after three hours of fishing, they could now get two to three kilos of fish, compared to the half-kilo they used to get before the sanctuary was set up.

Danao's progress in managing the environment and population had also earned for itself the Grand Galing Pook award last year in Malacañang. Abainza said the award would inspire them to continue to do more for their town.

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PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OPINION

Vol. 23 No. 119

The 'other crisis'

THE BUZZ FROM THE PHILIPPINE FUEL ETHANOL Alliance (PFEA) is that a number of investors have expressed eagerness to venture into bioethanol production. But before they pour in the capital, they want to see Congress pass the legal framework that would guarantee a market for their product. The PFEA stressed that "the government must first indicate its seriousness to address the security problem by placing the proper policies to attract investments from the private sector."

EDITORIAL

Ethanol, which is distilled from sugar cane, corn and cassava, is causing the biofuels push forward in an answer to the "other crisis"—the oil crisis. It may be that not everyone sees Earth's oil wells running dry, but everybody agrees that cheap oil has run out. When the price of benchmark Dubai crude reached $56 per barrel in May 2006, handing up to the $66 level, then to a record-high $70-a-barrel in September 2005, all the world scrambled to find viable alternatives to petroleum products. President Macapagal-Arroyo and the oil crisis had become a "real challenge to economic survival." And during the Asean summit held in Malaysia last December, even though oil prices had eased a little, she assured that they could still spin out of control.

Based on the 2004 oil prices and consumption, the Department of Energy estimates that the Philippines could save around P8.2 billion a year in foreign exchange, the value of oil imports that would be "displaced," if all diesel vehicles used coco diesel ($12.3 billion) and all gasoline-powered vehicles used a 5-percent ethanol blend ($7 billion). This does not include the P14 billion that would be saved from a 10-percent increase in the mileage of vehicles using coco-diesel.

But as has been pointed out in many forums, cutting on foreign exchange is only one of the many benefits of using biofuels. With the specter of global warming looming larger every moment, environmentalists laud biofuels as a source of clean energy. With the world's oil supply shrinking fast, biofuels are becoming more and more attractive as renewable energy. More significantly for Filipinos, biofuels are agri-based and can be produced locally from indigenous resources. Thus going into the production of biofuels could open thousands of new jobs in rural areas and provide the much-needed impetus for sustained countryside development.

Brazil, the first country to make ethanol its principal source of energy, produces ethanol at around $40-20 per barrel, far lower than the current world market price of crude oil, which hovers around $60 per barrel, although in various retail outlets, it sells at about the same price as gasoline in the Philippines. But this does not diminish the pivotal significance of local ethanol—or biofuels—production in the larger goal of reducing the country's dependence on imported oil.

All this our national leaders must surely know. We the fathom we have gone in their direction is House Bill 4628, also known as the Bioethanol Fuel Bill. The measure seeks to provide the legal framework for the local manufacture and use of bioethanol as transport fuel. Although the bill focuses mostly on bioethanol, its principal author, Bukidnon Rep. Miguel Zubiri, has assured that, if enacted, it will include other biofuel players in the same package of incentives, including tariff exemptions and easier access to credit. But while the Zubiri bill was approved by the House of Representatives in November 2005, it remains in limbo in the Senate. A counterpart-any bill-filed by Sen. Manuel Roxas, which would promote the production, distribution and use of motor vehicles powered by alternative fuels, seems to have also been forgotten.

No doubt the members of Congress are aware of this "other crisis," although their collective response to it makes us suspect that they may not fully understand its full dimensions. Or maybe, they just don't care. And so it seems to be addressed like one.

This is shortsighted, because rare is the crisis, like this one, whose solution promises to simultaneously provide multiple solutions to other pressing national problems. Here is an opportunity for our leaders to show that despite their serious political differences and clashing ambitions, they can still come together to work for the larger national interest. Can they summon the will to do it?

Trivia overload

VIEWPOINT

Juan L. Mercado

"WHY DOES AN ELEMENTARY'S HOMER let her another pass from detention remained never-resolved issue this long. In its wake, University students who opened the latest act in the blind by inventing a gadget to translate electronic messages to the unconscious thriller."

"In ordinary underpaying the difficult balance has to modern democracy...every aspect of public life tends to be politicized," Barry David points out. "Thus, if in the utterances of politicians, rather than the achievements of artists, military teachers and scientists, the less the public's attention."

Julie Bartel's point is a step further. The media set sensitive bridge linking various sectors of society to, when does this gridlocked, one-way traffic from politicians say about how we, in the press, do our jobs?

Answers are publicized by their cost: news around chunks. Joan Lyons would drill into editors at Harvard University's Shorenstein editorials. A blend of voices forces the journalist to the middle. They range from impervious voices to wreck whimpers, strong voices and those lulling, droll sentences and modulated tones.

"Listen to listen," Lyons would say. "Add out of this chorus, extract what is core, relevant—and significant. Put most, at the same time, think for yourself. That's the only way you can serve those you write or broadcast to."

Daily the press must make an overload of trivia. It needs to choose limited resources over wars swirling beneath the obvious. These "deep-running currents" include stories on which issues—from impeachment to labor laws lately raise to irreversible damage to society.

Politics spawns a cached of "instigative journalists," old critics claim. The tribe of science reporting has been expanded by political hacks, says UP development communication professor Rita Linsen. Why can't journalists do "for the science and technology field what the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism does very well for politics?"

R&D is not a "dirty word," not a "blank hole." The Internet, for example, has a weekly two-thousand-volume, multi-lingual technology. Other papers have similar features. And in between are former wags, the broadcast media come up with in-depth reports recommended by

Any three computer-mediated efforts adequate?

R&D have been a billion-dollar news beat for decades in advanced countries, says Linsen. The Chronicle Science Monitor, New York Times, Los Angeles Times, Time and Newsweek give full attention to these areas. "In the Philippines...it's a bit different," he says. Few science stories are print or are aired. "Probably we're not doing it right."

Physicist Armand Sanchez, for example, does not have that "deep-seated belief" that "science is good." But this two-term Toyota Society of Filipino Physicists is called US National Science Agency experts until he sees generally effects on human behavior upon by them. Those have spin-off for unscientists and other basic disasters.

Other talented Filipino scientists work in fields that impact on the daily lives of citizens. Dr. Jacqueline Briones is a world authority on fish meat-threatening red tide organisms. Dr. Cesar Saloma—a physicist who has written in a country where technical columns must put reduced kids to early grades than in "poorer" economies, like Bangladesh or Benin. Dr. Cesar Saloma of the UP Institute of Physics is probably the nation's brightest researcher in nonlinear optics and materials during the last five years. Astronomer Christopher Go of San Carlos University discovered a new red spot on Jupiter—an achievement recognized by Nasa.

But this work is gems, at best, professors whose efforts to get ignored. The Department of Science and Technology's allocation is one of the national government budget's midgets.

And coverage by media reflects this shriveled funding.

Michel Foucault is one reason. The price is also hobbled by old circadians. "But certified concepts of news from observer the sustained coverage of significant events," Lyons 2001 Penn Freedom Week modeled liberal material. "We need to report significant events as they unfold," it said. "We must point out consequences... And we need to discuss what has come before us. The reflections not take note of what is distant." Confusion once pointed out, will find our own well in mind.

Journalists in six national home areas. Trained warriors find homes paying jobs doing PR drill for the entertainment industry, a fraternity of the Philippines study found out. Others are ghost-write for executives. Few sign up with the media talents they have trained more privately.

Lack of background compels some journalists to call for 30-second "sound bites." Two paths below conflict after issues.

"How tall is the tallest plant?" asked the computer geek selected to fix the Southern Leyte roadside. "And the cause was deforestation, right?" The flawed question signaled his most breakdown into factor seekers.

"Shallow news gets the soul of our truth," the Cebu Daily News has pointed out. Issues headlay reader-less lack of start-up and failure to influence policy.

Many also write as in a last moment. "Many writers remain steeped in the 1960s...and keep on lengthy issues of institutions or agencies as a source of news," Linsen opined. "We look at leads that deal with outputs, results or impact on the lives of people."

"In the 21st century students, science is growing as a every bond of journalists," "but my students are not getting enough science courses, none the study. "How The Press Conveys Science." "The journalist who can write a balance between technical comments and readability is a rare breed."

But those who succeed in cutting through jargon-ridden mist apply their skills to issues of real national concern can make a signal service.

Questions

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

AUMAN QUIBONES HAD A VERY INTERESTING letter in the Opinion section last week. It went: "Considering Dante Jimenez's record—why pay him for the ballots—he qualifies as a dictator-ship. The survey is simple: 46 republics do not deserve this and find a chance to make such democracy work but indeed in the latter. For the majority who are poor, life under this citizenship and other countries that I made no difference. That some should 'more day to a state of emergency for the poor' explains why."

It's a thought worth pondering. My own reaction to it is that while that may explain in part the frustration and resistance that have crept into the national psyche, it doesn't cut the problem to size. In fact, it raises more questions than answers.

To begin with, I don't know that very many people will buy the premise that life for the poor during martial law and after Edsa I was pretty much the same. Or indeed more generally that the poor do not particularly care whether they live in a democracy or dictatorship. I do know that the poor get poorer materially and spiritually when Marcos declared martial law compared to when they were not. I do know that they fared better under martial law, but wanted less than the rest for them, running progress regardless. Pie are still seeking basic dignities.

I do know as well that the whole nation breathed a sigh of relief when martial law was lifted, the poor in much as the rich and middle class. The hope that things can be better is just as real in human beings, whatever their class or caste, as the inequities of it. To think of the poor as obedient is to underestimate them. Just to think of them as content is to underestimate their hunger [and so] courage is to insult them.

But I leave other readers to argue the point. As I said, the explanation raises only more complexities, the answers only raises more questions. The one question that just couldn't leave you in the lurch is: Why did we bungle the chance to make real democracy work?

There are many theories about this, most of them we've heard about already over the years. One is that the replacement of Marcos did not turn out to be his opposite but, if not worse, at least a botched quick. Or Cory's friends and relatives turned out no better than those of cronies. Or the new government failed to punish those of Marcos who had fought against it, and the thousands of true democracy heroes ended to fall on.

All these explanations have their merit. But they also overlook something very fundamental, at least to the side of the people in it. Why on earth did our elites fail to change? Why did our elites not present us to the heavens with something about it? The answer is not very flattering. Because we thought Edsa was not the beginning of things, but the end of things. Because we thought we had done our part in overthrowing a dictatorship that, in our candid eyes, was evil and like witches of yore (all about our capitals) while occupying here in a bus. Because we thought our task was over so we could leave the task of building real democracy to our leaders while we got back and looked on. Because we thought we could always run to Iron Knights in overthrowing a dictator and climb back to mediocre depths in building a democracy. And things would work out by themselves.

What is real democracy? It is a system that is built not on a strong republic but on a strong people. It is a system that is built not on representative democracy to be enjoyed but on people demanding their rights and fighting for them. It is a system that is built not on leaders making it work for the people but on the people making it work for themselves. We failed to take democracy seek for many reasons, but the most fundamental one is that we, the people, the citizens, thought the business of making it work fell only on our leaders, not on us.

The last word quotation that Quibones' answer came to. If we applied a decision-making tool failed to build a real democracy after Edsa I—and indeed after Edsa II—why should it be mistake by "Let's give up"? Why shouldn't the attitude be, "Let's try and try again until we succeed"?

I'll tell you why I don't think that's the best. Because it is easier to give up because we don't want to work for it in the first place. We repeat the task of building a better world on our leaders. And complain bitterly later that they are no better than the rogues they've taken. Of course, they are no better. Why should they be? Leaders are always no more no less than the people they lead. The people pursue...as the real sense that is a successful study and not merely every 15 years—as democracy.

Cassius was right. It is not in our stars but in ourselves that we are underlings. Only people who know we had to long and to hard and failed to achieve true good have a right to feel frustrated. People who know they have not worked hard enough called upon to battle themselves only now and then, deserve to be miserable. Only people who know they have not given their best in order to make democracy work have a right to feel betrayed. People who have prepared their soul for bouts of moral struggle, ground to sweat and toil, or who are just willing to accept dictatorship or death or democracy, whichever does not require more work or sacrifice, deserve only opprobrium or a bit of pity.

Destiny is the personal responsibility and I personal imagination, as Thomas Edison said. Therefore we don't write. It's just a words-made excuse for failure.

Keep corruption out of huge AFP spending

COMPARISON HAS BEEN MADE BETWEEN THE new barangay assemblies across the country and the "people's assemblies" during the martial law years to justify the "democratic" way Ferdinand Marcos governed. In the latter, it was observed that hand-picked barangay captains were appointed to implement Marcos' instructions. In the former, it was observed that elected barangay captains were operating, whether under the barangay assemblies or not, during martial law the tradition was not operating, whether under the barangay assemblies or not, during martial law the tradition was not operating, whether under the barangay assemblies or not, during martial law the tradition was not

Half-truth about bangus fry production

I'D LIKE TO SHARE THIS REACTION to the news report "Bangus leads Dagupan economy" (PDI, 3/25/06), specifically that portion which stated: "The BMR has established hatcheries in the provinces to sustain milkfish fry production requirements." This is only half true, and I don't mean to take away anything from the achievements of the Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources. While it's true that the BMR has established a few hatcheries, the claim that these hatcheries will sustain milkfish production is apparently erroneous and smacks of irresponsible reporting.

Did the reporter ever bother to check how much fry these BMR hatcheries produce? I'm willing to bet that their production is not even anywhere close to one percent of our country's national fry requirement!

Our country has been importing an estimated 1.5 billion bangus fry from Indonesia annually to the prejudice of local hatcheries and wild fry gatherers (marginalized fisherfolk). In other words, six out of every 10 pieces of the bangus we eat are grown from imported fry. (That is what sustaining the bangus industry means!)

This is not because BMR has set lowered unrestricted importation of bangus in the past four years, thus practically killing all local competition to develop our hatchery industry. In fact, three of the seven known private commercial hatcheries have already given up on the business because of linear brought about by the effects of importation. Several others who intended to invest in the enterprise have shelved their plans.

While all inputs to aquaculture have skyrocketed, the price of bangus fry has defeated (because of importation) to 30 percent of what it was five to six years ago. This combination of high-priced inputs and low-realized price of bangus has caused crippling losses to the hatchery industry! I can't even begin to imagine how many thousands of marginalized fisherfolk have been deprived of their seasonal income because of this.

Very disheartening indeed! Government policy (in the absence of an effective one) has killed the goose (the hatchery industry) that could have laid the golden eggs and insured self-sufficiency in our supply of bangus fry. This, after considering the fact that we can't export bangus fry. This, after considering the fact that we can't export bangus fry. Oh, did the government ever consider this?

—JERRY E. BRITTAIN,
alternate representative,
Bangus Hatchery Sub-Sector,
Bangus Council
of the Philippines,
jerrybrit@yahoo.com

My story merely reported that the BMR had established hatcheries to sustain milkfish fry production; not that BMR's production of bangus fry was enough to sustain the needs of the milkfish industry. Secondly, BMR's mission is clearly stated in the Newly Enacts, quoting the agricultural growth of Indonesia, and the Philippines imports only about 300 million fry from that country, not 1.5 billion, as claimed by Mendiola.

—THANON MENDIOLA-DUEÑAS,
correspondent,
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Unfit for publication in a national newspaper

Bangkal, Makati City

MSGR. LEONCIO LEJARDE, SVD, (2/13/06) would have been better placed in a magazine that targets artistic and "sophisticated" readers.

Because of her school work, my daughter only reads newspapers on weekends. I find it disturbing that objectionable articles like Tilde Ann's get published precisely on such days. It is hard enough to raise kids nowadays without exposing them to "disagreeable" ideas.

I do not like the way the article is mired to portray the life of a minister as a worthy aspiration for women. Do female readers appreciate this?

On one hand, we bemoan the high number of broken families and their impact on society; on the other, we find articles that glamorize and even seem to encourage women to "live a married life away from the comforts and stability of a home, wife and kids."

Lastly, I would like to ask if it is now OK to print "f—k"? As in "f—k me above"? I think he is "f—k me" himself. Just words like these need to be printed with a lot of asterisks. Does the Inquirer have a new standard? I hope not!

—ENRIQUE ORMEÑO.

Premature statement

I QUESTION THE ACTION OF SEC-CEN in spearheading the findings of the Department of Justice panel which investigated the Philippine Arena stampede last month.

I doubt the motive of SEC-CEN in prematurely spearheading the investigation of the National Bureau of Investigation whose only task was to complete the documents needed to begin a preliminary investigation. Even if probable cause was established, this did not mean that those charged had been found guilty.

A panel that was created earlier, headed by Interior Undersecretary Marius Corpus, found the officials of ABS-CBN liable for negligence. The DOJ, however, found its report incomplete for purposes of holding anyone criminally responsible of the catastrophic parties. The DOJ asked the SEC to complete the factual inquiry.

Those charged will be given their day in court to prove their innocence. Since no indictment is the stage of the investigation is given to refute such claims.

I ask the members of the DOJ panel not to be scared by ABS-CBN's toxic tactics and to stand pat on its decision to file the appropriate cases if there are sufficient by the circumstances. The truth must come out if only to ensure that those who died are vindicated. Justice, I hope that through the process, we will learn a painful lesson from that tragedy.

—REY ROBANTE B. MARCELETA,
Abagad Party List

GMA has the heart of Pharaoh

DEMONSTRATORS gather at the People Power monument to demand the ouster of President Arroyo.

THERE IS REASON TO CONclude that Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo has lost her heart and soul, and her sense of shame.

Think of these:

Eighty percent of the people don't like her. How can she face with honor and dignity people who are her as a liar, robber and a thief? But she seems to relish all these tags like a breakfast feast. She even brags that she is the best person to lead the nation.

She has become heartless, insensitive and disdainful of the people's sufferings. Instead of using people's money to uplift their miserable condition, she uses them and more of it for her personal benefit, leaving less and less for the poor, from P2b in tax harvest were to come back to life, he would not be able to soften the hardened heart of GMA. Her heart replicates that of the Pharaoh of Egypt, who refused to release the Israelites from bondage, until after God inflicted several plagues on his country.

The fact is the Philippines is now being ravaged by disasters like the floods of Mindoro, the "Ninarosan" catastrophe in the Philippine Arena, and the landslide in Southern Leyte. It is hoped that, by the same token, GMA will give up the presidency.

If, as alleged, it is true that she lied, cheated and stole to win the 2004 election, she has already forfeited her epic trust: gift of living an eternally happy life such God, for she has disobeyed at least two injunctions of the Scriptures: "It is a sin to lie" and "Don't covet thy neighbor's goods."

—PEDRO C. OBELLE,
president,
Agao Senior
Citizens Association,
Senior Citizens Center,
Real Park Compound,
Agao, La Union

Death penalty is cruel and morally unacceptable

THIS IS IN REACTION TO THE news story titled "CBCP backs repeal of death penalty" (PDI, 3/25/06). I wish to congratulate the Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines' Episcopal Commission on Prison Pastoral Care for convincing President Macapagal-Arroyo that the death penalty law should be repealed. The President has vowed to seek for that. I admire her for that decision. I strongly support the decision as well.

I still believe that human life is precious, infinitely more valuable than any material thing. No one has the authority to take someone's life except God. Every person has the right to change his life for the better.

Capital punishment is not a deterrent to the most heinous crimes. And it is cruel and unusual punishment. The Church deems it morally unacceptable. Instead of this, managing the commission of murder, capital punishment invalidates sin itself.

I know that the successors of the President to abolish capital punishment has been met with a lot of criticisms and debates. This is because she has a track record of changing her mind. But, I firmly believe that her decision is based on her Catholic conscientious.

I can see that she was sincere when she made the statement, and she can't afford to lose the trust of the people in her.

I urge Filipinos to redouble their efforts to convince the members of Congress that they have no right to relegate unto themselves God's exclusive authority to take away human life.

Let us support efforts in repealing the death penalty law.

—NOEL L. PARFAN,
Capital University,
Corrales Extension,
Cagayan de Oro City

Sunny Philippines, seen beyond the angst

MY HEARTFELT THANKS FOR A refreshing and informative write-up. I'm returning to the column of Augusto Villalon titled "Pinoy del bid, sunny your of Filipino heritage." (PDI, 3/13/06)

I am an expat living in the United States for 24 years, although I left the Philippines in search for opportunities in Asia. I do return to my country at least once every 4-5 years, making sure I travel to many of its places that I have not seen before or have taken for granted while growing up there.

The fact is the Philippines is now being ravaged by disasters like the floods of Mindoro, the "Ninarosan" catastrophe in the Philippine Arena, and the landslide in Southern Leyte. It is hoped that, by the same token, GMA will give up the presidency.

If, as alleged, it is true that she lied, cheated and stole to win the 2004 election, she has already forfeited her epic trust: gift of living an eternally happy life such God, for she has disobeyed at least two injunctions of the Scriptures: "It is a sin to lie" and "Don't covet thy neighbor's goods."

—PEDRO C. OBELLE,
president,
Agao Senior
Citizens Association,
Senior Citizens Center,
Real Park Compound,
Agao, La Union

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Mt. Province execs seek stop to war

BAGUIO CITY—A PEACE COUNCIL OF MT. Province has called for a stop to the ongoing fighting between government soldiers and communist rebels in four Mt. Province towns, saying the conflict has deprived people access to their fields, forests, pasturelands and watersheds.

The council, composed of town, religious leaders, community leaders and elders from the towns of Bauko, Sagada, Besao and Natonin, all in Mt. Province, is pressing for peace especially with in the boundaries where the fields and woodlots of the residents has been disrupted due to the fighting.

In a statement sent to the Inquirer, the council said it was joining the affected residents in condemning the conflict.

The statement was read as a pastoral letter in Catholic and Anglican churches in Mt. Province on Sunday.

It was signed by Msgrs. Alfonso Hab-ong (Bontoc), Rod Galenzoga (Sagada) and Sabino Bangaoet (Sagada), Provincial Assistant for Corridors Thomas Killip, barangay officials and Catholic and Anglican priests.

"The affected residents themselves requested to be pullout of the military because their livelihood is being disrupted," Thomas Killip, a former Sagada mayor, said.

The Inquirer called the Northern Luzon Command (Nolcom) for reaction, but a staff member said it has yet to issue a statement.

However, the Nolcom confirmed that the Army's 7th Infantry Division has been conducting the operation in the province.

The fighting between government soldiers and rebels started in the first week of March with the deployment of soldiers and the launching of air strikes in the forested areas within the boundaries of Bauko, Sagada and Besao (with Provincial Information).

On March 10, an MPA unit was hushed in Army convoy in Barangay Bagnen Sabsaban, Sagada and Besao after the government troops decided to pull out from the area.

After the ambush, more military troops were deployed and the fighting intensified with air strikes in Bauko, Atok, Sagada and Besao.

Military encampments and patrols have been reported in Barangay Lamog in Quirino town in Ilocos Sur, in Barangays Dalao, Alimit and Tambacan in Besao and Bauko (with Provincial Information).

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Iloilo execs warn of crop disaster as bugs invade

By Hector P. Barges Jr.
PDI Visayas Bureau

ILOILO CITY—SOME 10,000 HECTARES of local government officials in Iloilo have warned of the possible spread of the rice black bug that could destroy hundreds of hectares of rice fields in Iloilo province.

Ex-Sibalom Mayor Toledo, acting assistant provincial agriculture officer, said at least 225 hectares of rice fields in Barangays Pinamuan (Estrella) and Pinamuan (Jr.) in Pavia town and in Barangay Buhdasan in Santa town, had been infested as of March 15.

Toledo said at least 1,000 hectares of rice fields would be affected if the spread of the infestation was not stopped.

Iloilo province is the country's second biggest rice producer with a total production of 490,268 metric tons last year.

The rice black bug (*Scotinophara coarctata*), also known as the Philippine black bug, invades rice stems and juice. It infests the bases of rice stems and destroys them of sap, causing the plants to wither. The insect is commonly either dog bred or adults.

Reduction of production

Toledo said areas affected could suffer a reduction of production from 60 to 80 percent.

The Department of Agriculture is still determining how the bugs managed to infest the rice fields of Iloilo.

The bugs have a maximum height of 0.8 millimeter and a lifespan of 200 days (3-6 months). They are capable of producing 300 eggs each during their life span.

Main concerns

Toledo said one of their main concerns is how to prevent the bugs from laying eggs and control its spread.

The DA has issued guidelines to farmers and local government officials and agencies on how to help contain the spread of the infestation.

Among the measures being considered is the pulling up of "light traps" which captures the bugs in heavily-shaded containers after attracting them to bright lights.

The DA has also advised farmers to burn rice straws where the bugs usually were after eggs. Although, Bollido should slow be immediately alarmed and panicked with news to kill the bugs' eggs.

Farmers have also been advised to control the third cropping to break the life cycle of the bug.

Toledo said the bugs are resistant to commercial pesticides but can be controlled with the use of nonchemicals, a kind of bugs that kills adult bugs.

He says said of the presence

HATS OFF
Graduates of the Philippine Military Academy throw their hats into the air during graduation ceremonies at the PMA grounds in Baguio City.

Factory spills toxic waste into river

LUCENA CITY—PROBERS FROM the soap factory that spilled chemical waste into the Alitao River have set testing spread time to contain the spread of the waste by product.

According to Melvin Virginia, chief of the Quezon DENR-Environment Management Bureau (EMB), the owner of CBC Soap Industry sent plant workers to recover the solidified white and brownish foamy substance floating on the water.

"It seems that the factory owner has ordered his men to clean up to contain the spread of the water pollution. That's the first move in containing any type of hazardous spillage—clean the mess and prevent further spread to the unaffected areas," Pangilinan said after inspecting the site Saturday afternoon.

However, the DENR maintained that the effect of Willams Bang, the soap factory owner, was still not enough to prevent the flow of liquefied chemical downstream.

"We've asked that the spread of the chemical be already reached the downstream point of the river. We're warning another time to subsidize the chemical spillage," he said.

The chemical spillage has already flowed downstream to connect with Lyan River, one of the two main rivers flowing deep both sides of the city toward Tayabas Bay.

Pangilinan said the solidified mass had covered at least 50 meters of the Alitao River.

The main working limit of the soap factory suffered a leak Friday evening, resulting in the flow of chemical waste into the river.

"The plant owner could have prevented the spill the chance it came from the plant compound. But he did not do anything. The damage has been done," said Pangilinan.

The investigating group found that the flow of waste exited from a small channel inside the factory compound leading to the coal mix canal just outside the plant premises. Bellie Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Small miners take up arms to resist crackdown

BAGUIO/BOG, MISA VEGUNA —Small miners who are conducting gold panning operations in a remote village in upland Barlig town have taken up arms in support enforcement of a military crackdown against them, a mining official here confirmed on Monday.

Jovrel Mangaoang, representative of the Illanic and Gonowon Brown-up miners in Cagayan Valley, said rumors are now strongly prompted officials to order the closing operations which a multi-criminal task force was set to launch last month against illegal miners in Bulacan and Cagayan.

He was told of the presence of armed elements in the area. I suppose these are miners who can afford to buy firearms," he said.

The task force was formed last month to curb the rampant small mining in Diadak Hill in Dalguis, site of the proposed large-scale mining project of Australasia Philippines Mining Inc. (APMI), an Australian company.

Since 1994, APMI, formerly Climax Arimco Mining Corp., has been intending to conduct a large scale mining operation for gold and copper on Diadak Hill. However, it has failed to start operations due to the strong opposition of local communities.

Mangaoang said they had intended to bring in military and police personnel to drive out about 200 small miners from the area.

The miners were composed of Dalguis villagers and residents from as far as Ifugao and Benguet.

"We'll have to stop them [small-scale miners], they would secure the area so they can no longer go back," he said.

Local officials have expressed alarm over the unpleasant mining being conducted by small miners, who have degraded the Diadak Hill and flood-prone open-pit mining explosives for their operations.

The operation has already displaced at least 40 Ifugao families due to a dynamite blast in late December 2001.

The gold rush has also attracted villagers as well as strangers, which they blamed for the increase in robbery cases there.

But mountaining groups objected to the planned use of soldiers and policemen against the small-scale miners, fearing that the situation "might escalate into a bigger problem."

"Our findings revealed that many of the Dalguis people are not aware of the small-scale mining act, which they can use as an option instead of engaging in large-scale mining," Mangaoang said in Misis Edna Ochiel, director of the Diadak-based Diocesan Social Action Commission here.

Peter Dayupat, a village official, said small miners have complained to the AFMC that they intend to operations this year.

"They believe that they...cost a foreign company—they'll lose the wealth of their land," Dayupat said. Nicolas Gaweno, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

ROUNDUP

Suspect in mayor's slay falls

TARLAC, Tarlac—Cpl. Edgardo Cruz—Police Regional Office (PRO) 3 chief has arrested after boarding during a shooting spree on Friday ahead his police station in the 2001 killing of Mayor Jun Bellosillo of Mandaluyong, Concepcion valley. One of his shooting victims is Barangay Sierra Gorio, Tigo Sitez, immediately followed police about Chief Inspector Bernardino Tinal, Major Rolando Jamin, police station of Mayor Bellosillo, said Pangasinan, 41, of Bauchos town, and another car. Police seized from him a .45-cal. pistol. Bellosillo was shot and killed inside the Bauchos municipal Democratic, the death was followed to be related to existing operations in Mt. Davids, a base for company still operation. Joel Pazzio, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Fire survivors get shelter

CABANATUAN CITY—Social welfare officials in this Antonio are Region 3 Mother Mindanao have housed over 80 new shelters to evictees in a fire in Mabalong Lumao-Del Tao in 2001. The shelters from Barangay Bonsilo and Chamberos, considered among the poorest areas of the town. Sandray Sandoval, administrative officer of Pantabangan Municipal, chief of fire regional Branch head of Social Welfare and Development, said other survivors would receive new shelters. Sarmen Gaga, regional information chief, said the Army's engineering battalion built the housing units. Social Welfare Region 3 Secretary Nelly Sabino said the units cost P2.4 million.
Jeoffrey Mallen and Charlie Delace, PDI Mindanao Bureau

Indian killed in Cavite

CAMP EVERETT, Lipa—An Indian businessman was killed when he tried to fight back two suspected robbers with a gun. Gardenas Friday night. Cavite police director Senior Supt. Ramjeet Mamaru said Sardar Singh, 52, of Hindi Kanti, said six hits may have also friends ATM network in of around 7:30 p.m. after withdrawing money from the bank. Investigators said the businessman fought back with his gun. When the robber unfortunately shot his victim, he was shot. Mamaru said residents brought the victim to a nearby hospital where he was declared dead on arrival.
Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Summer job for students

LUCENA CITY—A total of 1,240 students are rewarded to benefit from the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) under the Department of Labor and Employment. Labor regional director Nicolas Meinan confirmed reports that allotted under PD 442 for the program under summer jobs for students in coordination with local government units and/or non-formal. Most Under the program, 40 percent of the wages of the students will be shouldered by the department and the remainder, by the hiring LGU or business concerns. Meinan said that of the 1,240 slots, 1,000 are for College students and the rest for Public Employment Service Office-identified qualifying the program in their localities. Edgar Allan, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Canadian-funded projects

LUCENA CITY—Canadian Ambassador Peter Tabuteau on last two March 25 on an inspection visits. Ambassador Tabuteau arrived in Alitao, to visit the Canadian-funded livelihood training project of the Del Rosario Farmers' Multi-Purpose Association which was completed in June 2001 and a new building for the project. He also visited the potable water system project of the Alitao Differently Disabled Persons Development Inc. in Barangay Silisi. Mabini town. Earlier Tabuteau met with members of the Metro Naga Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Naga City Investment Promotion Board to discuss possible investment and trade between.
Edgar Allan, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Bomb threat at Justice Hall

MANDAUE CITY—Some prospective bail of Justice here on Tuesday after an employee of the city prosecutor's office received a bomb threat from an unidentified caller. City police chief Supt. Nilo Rosa said about 300 employees were prevented out of the building upon learning of the threat. The Bar Prosecutor's Office received the bomb threat at around 8:30 a.m. Rosa said the caller, who identified himself as Dante, dropped the threat on the telephone line to the prosecutor's office. Prosecutor Rosalinda Cleto said such incidents are common in the Hall of Justice and that demands Sanchez ordered stricter implementation of security measures to safeguard court buildings and personnel.
Marlon Ramos, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

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Home of world's largest fish is overfished, says WWF study

By Blanche S. Rivera

DAVAO, HOME OF THE WORLD'S largest fish, is overfished, according to a study by WWF Philippines.

The crushing measure the fishes of around 3,000 municipal fishermen and a booming whale shark ecotourism that has made the sleepy town in Sarangani a world ecotourist destination she recently said.

The study done by the WWF, a global conservation group, showed that 32.8% of commercially important pelagic fishes like tuna, mackerel and sardines, are overfished in Davao.

"The fish catch rate is too high that the potential for fish stock to replenish itself every time is getting more difficult," Rael Diaz, head of the WWF Coastwall's Tuna Ecotourism and Coastal Resource Management Project in Davao, said in statement.

The one-year study on capture fisheries in Davao was conducted by the WWF in June last year and headed by the DARD.

The whale shark (Rhincodon typus) or butanding, known to be the largest fish in the world, has already become what spread up to $7 million a year for guides, boatmen and accommodation.

Revenues from the whale shark interaction, however, it only the third biggest source of income for the municipality where fishing remains the top source of livelihood.

The fishery industry in Davao sets an annual harvest of 1,250.39 metric tons of mostly scads or galunggong, sardines, mackerel and tuna, but this catch is threatened by the intrusion of commercial fishers in the municipal waters.

Commercial fishers catch around 12,000 metric tons of fish per year, putting pressure on the marine resources of the area, the WWF reported.

"Capture fisheries is now geared toward a condition of economic overfishing. This means that additional investment in the fishing operations doesn't yield additional fish catch as income to small fishers, "Diaz said.

The WWF has started a fisheries management plan in Davao to address the problem of overfishing. The WWF helped the local government unit and fishers to draft a municipal fisheries ordinance and toughen up enforcement against illegal fishing in Davao's waters.

Davao's fisheries management program is a collaborative effort of stakeholders to ensure food security and the sustainability of ecosystem in the province, the WWF said.

"The management plan and the ordinance will set in place mechanisms that will promote resource protection and rational exploitation of its coastal resources," Diaz added.

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Miriam goes on 'indefinite sick leave'

By Philip C. Tubeza

SEN. MIRIAM DEFENSOR SANTIAGO yesterday went on "indefinite sick leave" after suffering from hypertension and an irregular heart beat since Tuesday last week.

In a letter, the 69-year-old senator informed Senate President Franklin Drilon that her doctor had prescribed that she rest at home and take "a trip abroad" to avoid a possible stroke.

"On doctor's advice, I shall be on indefinite sick leave starting [yesterday]. The doctor diagnosed my symptoms as resulting from irregular heartbeat and hypertension," Santiago said.

"[But sick leave is necessary because in April last year, I suffered an ischaemic event (a decrease in the blood supply to an organ or part caused by constriction or obstruction of the blood vessels). To avoid a stroke, the doctor has prescribed home rest, and a possible trip abroad," she added.

Santiago said that if her vote on signature [because] "absolutely necessary for Senate business," she would be "available" at her Quezon City home.

Jesus Lagapa, Santiago's press officer, said the senator suffered from headaches, fever and fluctuating blood pressure after she returned from a trip to her home province of Iloilo last Tuesday.

He said Santiago had a family history of hypertension.

"It's hereditary. The senator eats a balanced diet and does not eat pork but sometimes, she still hypertensive," Lagapa said.

Santiago began resting at her La Vista subdivision home yesterday but her blood pressure continued to fluctuate, he said.

Although no foreign trip had been scheduled yet, the senator usually visits Hong Kong during the Holy Week, he added.

Aplus METRO
Editor Ester G. Dimanlig

WHAT'S INSIDE

- Navotas fishermen take time off for banca race A10
- Manila gives 'Big Three' 7 years to relocate oil depot A10

Mercury rises; school still closed

US experts' help sought

By Jocelyn R. Uy

[illegible] THREE THE ST. Andrew's school in Pandacan into a "hot spot."

The latest air analysis test showed that the mercury level in the school has risen further with the onset of the warm season.

Dr. Olga Virtudes, head of the City Health Office, yesterday said one of two classrooms in the school, where some students were exposed to mercury, continued to register high levels of the chemical, "way beyond the limitation level for children."

She added that the cleanup conducted on by a private company was not thorough enough to get rid of "beads" of mercury in the two classrooms.

"Those beads were ingested due to the hot climate and this caused the mercury level to rise," she said of the lecture premises.

Virtudes did not say what the mercury level in the school was, although previous tests had pegged it at above the threshold of two micrograms per cubic meter, which is considered toxic to humans.

The air analysis test was conducted last Saturday by the Interagency Committee on Environmental and Health, a coalition formed by the Department of Health. Virtudes added that they were trying to seek the help of US experts in performing another round of sanitation and cleanup. "We (present) has been delegated to an outside agency because the government has no expertise to do it," the city health official said.

Around 80 students were supposed to transfer on Feb. 16 during a recess class. Thirteen were later hospitalized for symptoms of chemical exposure, prompting St. Andrew's officials to close the school indefinitely on Feb. 22.

Graduating students of the school held classes at the nearby St. Paul's College until March 17. Those who were not graduating were placed on a home study program. Yesterday they returned to the classrooms, although not at St. Andrew's, but at St. Paul's.

"Since classes at St. Paul's College ended last Friday our students could now occupy its classrooms for the meantime," said Rhodilla Sory, St. Andrew's principal. "All students from nursery, kinder, preschool, Grade 1 to Grade 5 and freshmen to quarter came back to school yesterday," she added.

Kidnap suspect held for holding boy in cockpit

By Jocelyn R. Uy

A MAN WAS ARRESTED yesterday after he allegedly kidnapped a four-year-old boy in Pandacan City.

Chief Insp. Rodolfo Ir. of the Police Community Precinct-3 said the suspect, Ruben Rosales, and a companion, allegedly lured the boy into joining them by offering him candy and a bottle of pop.

He said the child was playing with his two cousins outside their house at Upper Bicutan, PNR Site, Barangay San Martin de Porres at 5 p.m. yesterday when the suspects approached them.

"The suspects allegedly asked the three children to help them look for a cockpit in the area. Only the four-year-old boy agreed," said he.

Neighbors who saw the incident immediately alerted the police and the Philippine National Construction Corp.

Police were able to find Rosales and the child in a workoff on PNR Site, Barangay Tanyag, Taguig City....Still unidentified companion was able to elude escape.

The suspect has denied kidnapping the boy, adding that the child last accompanied him to the cockpit.

'Big 3' given 7 years to find new home

By Tina G. Santos

THE CITY OF MANILA HAS GIVEN the so-called "Big Three" oil companies seven more years to relocate their depot in Pandacan.

Councilor Lourdes "Bonjay" Isip-Elamparo, who authored the ordinance redescribing the area where the oil depot is located, said Caltex, Shell and Petron would have to move out by 2013.

The Manila Comprehensive Land Use Plan and Zoning Ordinance of 2006 calls for the area's revitalization, from industrial to tourism- and residential. As a result, the oil depot would no longer be allowed to operate in Pandacan.

The ordinance has already been passed by the City Council and is just awaiting the approval of Mayor Alfredo Lim.

But in an earlier interview, Atienza said that he would immediately sign the ordinance changing the area's classification from industrial.

"I will sign it in case, all three would really have to relocate because of potential and imminent dangers that are harmful to the safety and health of our people," he said.

Cabo for the danger of the oil depot were renewed after gasoline overflowed from a storage tank of Caltex last Thursday. Although officials said that the problem was contained immediately, the incident caused widespread panic.

Atienza added the oil firms would relocate the depot to a reclamation area in Tondo.

"We're not saying these oil companies they can still operate within Manila for only in a place where they would not pose danger to the public," the mayor said, adding that another oil company is already negotiating for the area.

Isip-Elamparo, however, said that under the new ordinance, the reclaimed area would be considered a light industrial area.

"They [oil companies] can no longer operate within the city," Isip-Elamparo told Inquirer. "The oil companies now operating in the area, if so has to move out in seven years. Depot operations are considered heavy industrial, so it's still not suitable there."

She said she will file a resolution creating a committee that would investigate Thursday's oil overflow incident.

"Oil companies should submit a complete report on the incident to pinpoint the cause of the gasoline overflow," Isip-Elamparo said, adding that the committee will be composed of city public safety officials.

KEEP PLAY
Children horse around with a alleged figure in a public park in Manila. With classes over, they must find ways to amuse themselves during the summer break. AFP

Alternative routes planned for SLEx rehab project

By Jocelyn R. Uy

ALTERNATIVE ROUTES WILL BE mapped out once the South Luzon Tollways Corp. begins the rehabilitation and expansion of the shifting Thakat and the South Luzon Expressway (SLEx).

On Wednesday, Manuel Lopez Villafuerte, chief executive officer of SLEx, said the company has already begun discussing options in preparation for the rehabilitation of the expressway.

All structures such as concrete barriers, center islands and islands would be removed, he added.

Motorists said they have given SLTC a one-month deadline to finish the clearing operations to prevent the worsening of traffic in the shifting Interchange.

The 4th traffic management bureau would also put up a "garage-type flexible barricade" on different streets to ensure the smooth flow of traffic, Nazareno added.

Once the rehabilitation of the SLEx and the 20-year old Thakat starts, night work in areas are prone to traffic would be enforced on a 24-hour basis, and only at night time during major Thursdays.

The southbound lane of the Alabang Thakat would be closed to traffic. Motorists would have to take Bumpy Street toward Alabang-Zapote Road, left to Filinvest Avenue and exit to the Filinvest subway.

The northbound lane, on the other hand, would remain open to help ease traffic flow.

"The Philippine National Construction Corp. has not to proceed to on the rerouting plan once the northbound lane of the viaduct begins," Tan Hinonor of the city's Public Information Office said.

The rehabilitation of the viaduct's southbound lane is expected to take at least six to eight months.

Muntinlupa Mayor Jaime Fresnedi, meanwhile, welcomed the expansion of the viaduct from six to eight lanes, saying it would improve its volume capacity and structural integrity.

"It also hoped that the project will decongest traffic in the city, making it more conducive for trade and commerce.

Transportation Secretary Leandro Mendoza has emphasized the need to rehabilitate and upgrade the SLEx, considering that 47 vehicles use million passengers and 250,000 vehicles daily. Also, portion of a segment is in poor condition and plans also pass through the expressway.

Right choice for antismuggling unit

IT'S OFFICIAL! CITY MAYOR SONNY Belmonte's right not to allow gambling in his city.

But if that kind of gambling—the Jueteng (ONG) is coordinated by the national government, not the mayor, under the intent of what he professes anti-vice.

That's what Quezon City cops did to a licensed STL operator in the city, the Benchmark department store International Corp.

Among those arrested were employees of the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO) that gave the license to Benchmark.

Benchmark claims it was ordered by the city council to cease-and-desist operations in the southern zone.

The STL, managed by the PCSO, is the government's answer to the eradication of illegal jueteng.

It is the same as jueteng, and only differs in name. The STL allows more the same collectors as the unsupervised ones in jueteng.

ON TARGET
Manuel Tinio

The game is supposed to generate additional revenues for the cash-strapped national government.

It is not new as it made its debut during the time of President Cory Aquino.

But some of Cory's relatives allegedly became so greedy they wanted to corner the market. That's why the illegal STL failed.

President Macapagal-Arroyo has designated Customs Commissioner Napoleon Morales as head of the anti-smuggling task force.

Morales should head the task force more than any other smuggler in the job of the Bureau of Customs.

In the past, a military general and a Cabinet member were appointed to head the anti-smuggling task force to the dismay of the customs commissioner.

Three appointees were not successful in going after smugglers.

If the President cannot trust the customs commissioner to go after smugglers, who else can she trust?

My sources at the ports say agents of the police's Criminal Investigation and Detection Group (CIDG) assigned to go after smugglers are not doing their jobs.

A customs source said that of the line verbalar phrase that came out of the ports was apprehended Friday by CIDG agents, according to my spies.

The shipment was declared as cheap goods, and so the broker allegedly paid only nominal duties to it.

The cargo was released after the brokerage allegedly paid off the CIDG officers to the tune of P400,000 cry-and-cry said.

By the way, the broker is identified only by Maggie Estrada, according to my sources.

NAVOTAS fishermen race in their bancas at the reclamation park, a yearly event to celebrate fishermen's Month. EDGAR SUSCANO JR.

Boat race draws out Navotas fishermen

By Nancy C. Carvajal

THIRTY FISHERMEN IN SAwali brought out their newly-painted motorized bancas recently to join a boat race highlighting the month-long festival in their honor.

"Although the number of local fishermen who left in the coastal waters of Navotas has dwindled, participants in the race have increased," said Froilan Catalan a long time organizer of the boat race.

The event has been a tradition in the fishing town since 1997.

Catalan said a former member of the city council, Reynaldo Almeda, who used to be a fisherman, had proposed the holding of the festival in part tribute to the livelihood of the town's coastal-dwelling folks.

The March 17 race, which started at 9 a.m. and ended at 3 p.m., is a big event for townsfolk who fish for a living, although fish in the coastal waters had become increasingly scarce, Catalan said.

Spruced up

"Commercial ships in their boats and practice for the race days before the event," he added.

As a precaution, participants also take an extra hand to help out to ease the engines' rush out.

Contestants set out from various improvements from their docks, keen in the direction of Barangay Tangos, and then proceed to the town's coastal commercial port.

Cheering spectators egged on their favorite racers as they passed the race in progress from the starting point along the major Navotas Pier.

The race also serves as a jam for small fishing boats during the rainy season.

The race was classified into three categories: Class A for boats with waterlines of not less than 26-feet, Class B for shorter boats, and class C for the boats.

Winners for each category received a cash prize of P15,000 for the first place, and P5,000 and P3,000 for second and third prize winners, respectively.

Ex-soldier arrested for lobbing grenade

By Tarra V. Quismundo

A FORMER SOLDIER NOW SUSpected contractor after he threw a grenade at a group of men, one of whom was his relative, in Malabon City.

Benedicto Calderon, 34, now faces charges of attempted murder, resisting arrest, duties and assault, and illegal possession of explosives.

His distant cousin, Hall Lieutenant, 31, was taken to the hospital for treatment after he sustained injuries to his foot in a result of the explosion.

According to the police, Lieutenant and two other men were drinking at 5:45 a.m. yesterday inside a compound on Gonzalez Street in Barangay Santos, Malabon City, when Calderon, his neighbor, passed by.

The group offered Calderon a drink, which he accepted.

Calderon's nephew PO2 Jesus Vigilla said in the group was drinking. Calderon got irked when Lieutenant stood in the front to the grenade in his pocket.

The suspect then allegedly pulled a fight with Lieutenant, at one point even threatening to hurt his elder.

Vigilla said the suspect left the scene, only to return after a few minutes to lob a grenade at the three men. Lieutenant and the other men, however, were able to run away although he was hit by shrapnel in the foot.

Calderon, on the other hand, barricaded himself in his house.

Malabon policemen who went to the scene tried to get him to surrender but he refused.

A Special Weapons and Tactics team was called in but when the former soldier still refused to surrender, they forged into his house and took him into custody.

Calderon was later taken to the Malabon Crime Laboratory Station.

The 9MM team, meanwhile, found another hand grenade in his house.

MetroBriefs

One bullet, two deaths

THE KILLED WHO WAS JUST ON HIS WAY HOME after work last two people were killed. The bullet hit him while he was on Gonzalez Subdivision in Caloocan City on Tuesday night. The man who fired the gun, Ramon Cruz, 32, escaped after the incident. Tender Jesus Edquilan, 30, resident of the subdivision, and Jonathan Abrahan, 19, resident of Langaray, Malabon, were found on a pool of blood in Barangay Maysilo, Malabon City, on Tuesday when they passed by. The police said that both were shot in the head. Cruz, the suspect, was arrested by the police. Edquilan and Abrahan were on their way home after playing a basketball game when they were shot. Edquilan died instantly while Abrahan was rushed to the hospital but he died later. Police said that Cruz was drunk when he shot the two victims. Motives for the killings were not known. Investigators brought the victims to the nearby Bonifacio Hospital. Cruz, who was arrested, is detained at the Caloocan City Police Station. —Jaime C. Tandoc

Immoral but not illegal

A BAR JUDGE, Bonifacio Investigation (BIO) official said that Justice Bonifacio Gonzalez is not violating bar examination rules by allowing his son to take the bar exam while facing charges. "We can say that their bonding activities are immoral because they are essentially taking advantage of small-time Filipino businessmen. But what they are doing is not illegal because they are not violating any law," said BIO Director Ricardo Lindayag. Lindayag said the BIO will not file any case against the two. The government previously imposed a ban on bar examinees under the Bar Examinees Law, but this was repealed years ago when the Supreme Court declared it unconstitutional. —Margaux C. Salcedo

ILLUSTRATION STANDARD

Saudi engineer files suit

THE MAJOR of radio engineer Jonathan Tiongson's illegal lobbies against the media opened another chapter yesterday after he dropped libel charges against four news organizations, including the Inquirer. Art Martinez, a member of the Legal Affairs Committee of the Philippine Center for Investigative Journalism, ABS-CBN and Manila Times were the publications of stories accusing him of harassing PCIJ. Tiongson, the counsel report presented by Michael Defensor to question the activities of the "news hour" of the group, said the media groups harassed him when they reported on PCIJ executive director Sheila Coronel's issues between accusing him of harassment and calling him "crazy." He said Coronel already held a formal meeting on March 14 that he had applied for harassment and extortion against the PCIJ boss Inez Gamos. The results have been pending in earlier charges. Coronel also alleged that Tiongson earlier who were "harassing" PCIJ by filing several libel cases against them, and quoted Defensor as saying Tiongson who "crazy." In a statement complaint before the Quezon City prosecutor's office, Tiongson said he read a statement considered that attack on him was broadcast or printed to PCIJ and newspaper reports. —EJ Dy

Free cleft lip/palate surgery

SMILE Train (PIA), a US-based foundation which has been helping children born with cleft lip and palate, is set to operate on 200 Filipino kids to soon-children with the Philippine Band of Mercy. For more information on how to avail of cleft surgery, please contact the PIAS (639) no parties, please contact the PIAS at 851 Boni-Ave Street in Mandaluyong City. You can also call 4345 61 to 10 or send your message to 098 7-9024 912.

Immigration debate heating up in US Senate

WASHINGTON—[illegible] 30 immigrants and pointed as a lesson for the opponents, the United States now is struggling to decide the fate of as many as 12 million people living in the country illegally.

The Senate refuses up the emotional debate on the heels of weekend rallies that drew hundreds of thousands of people protesting attempts to toughen laws against immigrants, raising the election-year proposals that President George W. Bush and members of Congress are considering:

- Erecting a fence on the Mexican border to deter illegal immigration.
- Denying people who speak accents the chance for tuition to be deductible.
- Allowing foreigners to stay in the country legally as custodians, dish washers, construction workers and other low-paid employees.
- Allowing those working in the US a path to citizenship.
- Requiring them to get in line behind everyone else back in their home countries who want to become immigrants.

Senate aides met into the evening Sunday in advance of a Senate Judiciary Committee meeting to debate legislation, but there was no evidence of a breakthrough on the issue most in dispute. Lawmakers have been divided on whether illegal immigrants should be required to return to their home country before they become eligible for US citizenship.

For his part, Bush arranged to attend a Monday naturalization ceremony for 20 new citizens at Constitution Hall, a few blocks from the White House.

And demonstrations are planned near the Capitol, including a prayer service with immigration advocates and clergy who plan to wear handcuffs to demonstrate the criminalization of immigration violations.

Bush is going to Mexico this week for a meeting with the leaders of Mexico and Canada. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said Sunday it's important that Mexico "recognize the importance of defense of the borders and of Americanness."

Protests raged across the country over the weekend, led by more than 500,000 people who marched through downtown Los Angeles on Saturday in one of the largest demonstrations for any cause in recent US history. Marchers also took to the streets in Phoenix, Milwaukee, Dallas and Columbus, Ohio.

Demonstrations continued Sunday, when nearly 3,000 people, many wrapped in Mexican flags, rallied at the Utah State-house in Columbus and an estimated 3,000 United Farm Workers members and their supporters protested in Los Angeles.

The president, meeting Sunday in Israel with the business community that relies on cheap labor, is pressuring Congress to allow foreigners to stay in the country legally if they take a job that Americans are unwilling to do.

Judiciary chair Arlen Specter, a Pennsylvania Republican, also supports the idea and has vowed that his committee will advance a bill by the full Senate on Monday, even if they have to work "very, very late into the night."

"I don't re prepared to work in become American citizens in the long line traditionally of immigrants who have helped make this country, we can't ever both accuses of laws and a welcoming nation of workers who do some very very important jobs for our economy," Specter said Sunday on ABC's "This Week." AP

Surprisingly huge rallies

ARTHUR ULIGNIER/WIRETAP

With the size of illegal immigrants living in the United States, they can expect to do so almost in backdrop of thousands of demonstrators.

Rallies by immigrants around the country have attracted crowds that have reminded events their organizers. More than a half million demonstrators marched in Los Angeles on Saturday, as many as 300,000 in Chicago on March 10, and tens of thousands in Denver, Phoenix, Milwaukee and smaller cities.

The demonstrations embody a surging constituency for an overhaul of immigration laws that is being pressed as never before by immigrants, who want long thought too fearful of deportation to risk to public a display.

The Pew Hispanic Center estimates that of more than 11 million illegal immigrants, 78 percent are from Mexico or other Latin American countries. Many have children and other relatives who are US citizens. Under a House proposal, such family members, like other American citizens including clergy, social workers and lawyers, would risk up to five years in prison if they helped an undocumented immigrant remain in the United States. AFP

Germans most brainy Europeans

LONDON—[illegible] ARE THE most intelligent people in Europe, well ahead of the British (number 6, plus) and the French (15th), according to a new study by Northern Ireland's University of Ulster. The Times reported Monday.

With an average intelligence quotient (IQ) of 107, a scientific study put them above the Dutch who rate second 107, the Polish 106th, the Swedish (13th) and the Italians (102).

They all came out better in the intelligence stakes than the British who trailed an extra 100 IQ according to the study, ahead of the Spanish (98) and the French (94) who could only comfort themselves by shocking the study results for Portuguese, Romanians, the Turkish and Serbians who languished at the bottom of the table on 86.

Professor Richard Lynn, who headed the study, turned controversy last year by claiming that men were more intelligent than women by about five IQ points on average.

He told of his latest findings that populations in the colder, more challenging environments of Northern Europe had developed larger brains than those in warmer climates further south.

The average brain size in Northern and Central Europe is 1,320cc and in southern Europe it is 1,302cc, according to his studies.

He ascribes the difference between British and French intelligence levels to the results of military conflict. He described it as "a hitherto unrecognized law of history" that "the side with the higher IQ normally wins, unless they are hugely outnumbered, as Germany was after 1942," The Times reported. AFP

FIERCE LOVE

Two African lions roar while resting in Kenya's Masai Mara game reserve March 22. The lions' mating take place at most times of the year when the dominant male and the female in heat leave the pride and mate every 15-20 minutes for several days in a row. REUTERS

Blair says he was wrong to announce plan to quit

CANBERRA—[illegible] BRITISH PRIME Minister Tony Blair caused a stir back home Monday after suggesting he may have made a mistake by stating publicly that he would one day hand his crown to his ally.

Blair's comments—presented upon by British journalists traveling with him on his Asia-Pacific tour—were made in an interview with Australian Broadcasting Corporation radio.

The 52-year-old politician was asked specifically if the announcements was a "strategic mistake," given that it fuels speculation he will step down sooner every time either he or his governing Labour Party face controversy.

He told ABC radio there would always be calls for a change of leadership when a prime minister reaches his third term and nearly 10 years in office.

"You just get on with the job because this speculation, I think, probably would happen whatever decision you take," he said.

"Now, it was an eventual thing for me to say how people kept asking me the question so I decided to answer it. Maybe that was a mistake," he said.

The remark featured prominently in television news bulletins in London, prompting Blair's official spokesperson to offer clarification that he had been cut off by the interviewer's follow-up question.

"If he hadn't been interrupted, what he was going to say was that his calendar was the hope that it (the public comment about stepping down) would kill the speculation about his future," the spokesperson said. AFP

Asians in Dubai cry for rights

DUBAI, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES—When hundreds of workers angered by low salaries and mistreatment rioted Tuesday night at the site of what is to become the world's tallest skyscraper, not only were they representing the growing frustration of Asian migrants here, they offered a glimpse of an increasingly organized labor force.

Of the 1.5 million residents of Dubai, as many as a million are immigrants who have come here to work, with the largest subgroup being construction workers, said Shadi Channel, a researcher with Human Rights Watch who across the United Arab Emirates, citing government statistics. The vast majority of the immigrants come from the Indian subcontinent and the Philippines.

With the cost of living rising, many have abandoned dreams of returning with a fortune. The construction workers' camps, in particular, have been set up over deeper in the desert. That adds an hour or more to get to the jobs sites every morning, in addition to the workers' 12-hour shifts.

Since September, when 300 workers staged a protest march down a main highway in the heart of the city and set off a national debate about the treatment of laborers, laborers have held at least eight major strikes to demand their rights and get their pay. AVV

ARTIST impression of Burj Dubai, a $20-billion project, the tallest building to be in the world. REUTERS

Thai opposition refuses Thaksin's coalition offer

BANGKOK, THAILAND—[illegible] opposition parties of Thailand's embattled Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra on Monday rejected his offer to include them in a new government if he is re-elected, prolonging political uncertainty less than a week before national elections.

"The opposition will not play Thaksin's game. Thaksin's proposal for a national government is only a political ploy," Bonnadi Paribatra, secretary-general of the Democrat Party, told reporters. His comments were echoed by the main opposition Democrat Party.

Thaksin's three main opposition parties are beginning Sunday's coup elections, called by Thaksin to defuse growing antigovernment protests that have been launched almost daily for several weeks.

The rallies have failed to shake Thaksin's resolve or may increase in a surprise move Sunday night, Thaksin appeared to offer a new promise to his critics, saying he would include them in a new government if he wins the election.

"I plan to form the national government after the election, and I am pleased to offer Cabinet positions to Democrat and Chart Thai parties in my government as part of an effort to form broad, antigovernment to establish political reforms," Thaksin told reporters on the outskirts of Bangkok.

Thaksin's comments came after weekend rallies in Bangkok that drew tens of thousands of protesters.

Protest organizers on Saturday called on King Bhumibol Adulyadej in interviews to the political crisis and appoint an interim government.

Abhisit Vejjajiva, leader of the Democrat Party, said Monday the opposition was pushing ahead with its intention to set an interim government installed—and would not accept Thaksin's invitation for the opposition to join his government.

"The formula of an interim government is totally different from Thaksin's proposal for a national government," Abhisit Vejjajiva leader of main opposition Democrat party said. AP

Poll puts 'Orange' rivals back into each other's arms

KIEV—[illegible] PARLIAMENTARY election have dealt a humiliating personal blow to President Viktor Yushchenko but are likely to push his splintered "orange revolution" team back together, analysts said Monday.

Yushchenko saw hopes in a national election both by the cases he ushered in the "orange revolution" protest a little over a year ago, and by the measures he fired as premier six months ago, according to the exit polls.

The president's Our Ukraine bloc received just 16 percent of the vote, compared to 32 percent for Viktor Yanukovych's Regions Party and 22 percent for Yulia Tymoshenko's bloc, the polls respondents said.

The first official results were expected at about 0000 GMT Monday with final results taking "at least a week" according to election commission representative Marina Ostapchuk, quoted by the Russian Interfax news agency.

The results are the Ukrainian population's evaluation of [illegible] Yushchenko's first year in office. They have given their mandate to his opponents," said Ihor Bakumenko, political analyst in Kiev.

Yushchenko was swept into power after the 2004 "orange revolution" street protests over a controversial presidential ballot, until which the nation's supreme court threw out the results that initially handed victory to Yanukovych.

The three opposition leaders easily won a rerun ballot but his popularity has plummeted as the economy slumped and the "orange" team split into squabbling factions.

The president's apparent poor showing in Sunday's poll will push him towards a coalition with Tymoshenko, analysts agreed early Monday while officials from the two parties suggested an agreement could be signed later in the day.

"The most probable coalition will be orange ... the Regions Party's victory is only a formal one," said Volodymyr Fesenko, an independent analyst.

Said Serednenko: "This is a blow for Yushchenko, but not defeat."

Tymoshenko too downplayed the Regions victory, set to be confirmed officially saying an orange coalition would relegate Yanukovych's party to its opposition role in the new parliament.

"This is absolutely okay. The country needs a strong opposition," Tymoshenko said in early morning televised remarks.

Tymoshenko looks set to regain the premiership in a coalition with Our Ukraine.

"Our Ukraine has agreed on the position that the force that gets the most votes ... will propose its candidacy for the prime minister's post," said Roman Zvarych, campaign chief for Our Ukraine.

When asked what would happen if Yushchenko refused her candidacy for the premiership, Tymoshenko said in televised comments: "He would have to agree to the premiership of [Viktor] Yanukovych."

Such a coalition would allow Yushchenko to continue reforms aimed at driving Ukraine toward membership in the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), analysts said.

But an alliance between the president and his erstwhile "orange" partner is likely to be tense, as the acrimonious Yushchenko and unseasoned Yanukovych are likely to spar on several issues, analysts say. AFP

TYMOSHENKO

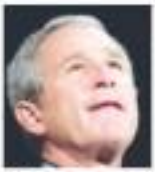
The WORLD

Editor Lawrence K. Quinn

Iraq war sealed months before invasion

LONDON—IN THE WEEKS BEFORE THE US-LED invasion of Iraq, as the United States and Britain pressed for a second UN resolution condemning Iraq, President Bush's public ultimatum to Saddam Hussein was blunt: Disarm or face war.

But behind closed doors, the president was seeking what was unavailable. During a private two-hour meeting in the Oval Office on Oct. 31, 2002, he made it clear to Prime Minister Tony Blair of Britain that he was determined to invade Iraq without the second resolution, or even if international inspectors failed to find unconventional weapons, said a confidential memo about the meeting written by Blair's foreign policy adviser and reviewed by The New York Times.



BUSH: ... ar

"Our diplomatic strategy had to be arranged around the military planning," David Manning, Blair's chief foreign policy adviser at the time, wrote in the memo that summarized the discussion between Bush, Blair and six of their top aides.

"The start date for the military campaign was now pencilled in for 10 March," Manning wrote, paraphrasing the president. "This was when the bombing would begin."

Although the United States and Britain aggressively sought a second UN resolution against Iraq—which they failed to secure—the president told reporters only that he did not believe he needed it for an invasion.

Stamped "extremely sensitive," the five-page memorandum, which was circulated among a handful of Blair's most senior aides, had not been made public. Several highlights were first published in January in the book "London Calling."

Although the memo outlines by a British lawyer and international law professor, Philippe Sands, in early February, Channel 4 in London first broadcast several excerpts from the memo.

Since then, The New York Times has reviewed the five-page memo in its entirety. While the president's statements about invading Iraq were known at the time, the previously unreported minutes offer a softened view of two leaders on the brink of war, yet supremely confident. AFP

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Concepcion Dursbles, Inc.

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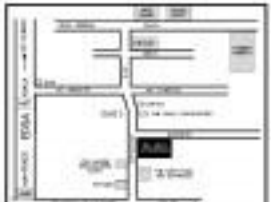
March 31, Friday



Philippine Center for Entrepreneurship

IRAQI Shiite militiaman Fethiya prepares materials for bombs to be planted in Kadhimiya mosque, in Baghdad, Iraq March 24. R

US accused of massacre of Iraq worshippers

BAGHDAD– (FOURTH LEAD) – Heavy Iraqi Shiite majority accused US troops of massacring 30 worshippers at a Baghdad mosque on Sunday but police and residents said many died in clashes between Shiite militia fighters and Americans.

US military spokespersons declined comment on the accusations but issued a statement describing a raid by Iraqi special forces, with US advisers, on a building they said was a mosque but is used by the conservative Sunni Muslim majority were killed.

Police and US forces clashed with the Mehdi Army militia of radical Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, killing 30 fighters.

With Baghdad's curfew still in force it was impossible to pin down what happened. But unusually explicit and TV coverage not generally seen in Iraq state television showed a fierce confrontation between the police, Shiite islamists and the US administration.

A spokesperson for Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari said the premier was "deeply concerned" and had called the US ambassador to Iraq, Zalmay Khalilzad, who said there would be a full inquiry.

Also on Sunday, US forces arrested 41 officials from the Shiite-controlled interior ministry and freed 17 foreigners from a secret jail, government, political and US sources said.

The arrest of Baghdad, Iraqi troops found 1,200 bodies, many of them beheaded, in a village raised, and in the days since several thousand police arrested one of their own majors, the brother of the regional police chief, over Shiite death squad killings.

The country came to Washington raises pressure on the Shiites to bring to their knees to government—it is even planning landmark talks with hostile Shiite Iran to break the impasse. Many fear a failure of the plan could plunge Iraq into civil war.

Images were televised, carried lengthy footage of Sadr-controlled car parts of men in civilian clothes, in western whose no weapons were visible, calling them victims of US gunfire.

"American forces raid and burn Muslim mosques. A number of citizens martyred in vain," it said in an on-screen headline.

One dead man had a membership card from Jaafari's Dawa party, distinct why Jaafari couldn't understand a US "picture of aggression." Leading sides to Sadr denounced the US troops.

Sadr aide Hamza al-Turaji later said: "We are calling for calm ... We do not want to be dragged into a global war."

Though supposedly dethroned in 2004 after two uprisings were crushed by US forces, the Shiite Mehdi Army remains a significant force, along with other progovernment militias which has no sense of running church squads against them.

Since 2004, Sadr, with apparent Iranian backing has become a virtual kingmaker within the dominant Shiite alliance bloc—he crucially it backing Jaafari to remain prime minister despite opposition from Sunnis, Kurds and some Shiites rivals. Reuters

SPORTS
Editor Teddyboy S. Melendrez

- Cavs nip Rockets; Pacers stop 76ers /A20
- DHL Amateur Open tees off /A20

WHAT'S INSIDE
- Marta, Amelie down rivals /A21
- Ames wins, takes vacation /A21

PEPPERY Montalvo standout Alex Compton drives past TeleTech's Nino Belig in Saturday's game won by the Jewels.

PBL: Tortillos, Jewels collide for early lead

THERE WILL BE NO TRACE OF bitterness when Granny Goose coach Robert Sison faces his former team in the PBL Unity Cup today.

"I'm coaching without hatred in my heart," said Sison. "For me, I'll just coach. It's nothing personal."

Granny Goose and Montalvo will depose the early lead at 4 p.m. at the San Andres gym after Magnolia and Cebu Slickcraft at 2 p.m.

Sison said he was initially apprehensive after spending only one season with the Tortillos.

"I was worried that there might be resentment but I didn't see that," said Sison, who assigned Jean Montalvo after a disagreement with the management.

The Tortillos kicked off their campaign with a 64-55 upset win over the Magnolia Openers, last conference's champion.

The Jewels also had a good start, rolling host, newcomer TeleTech Titans, 65-61.

STANDINGS	W	L
[illegible]	1	0
[illegible]	1	0
[illegible]	1	0
[illegible]	1	0
[illegible]	0	1
[illegible]	0	1
[illegible]	0	1
[illegible]	0	1

GAMES TODAY (Fun Arena Cup)

2 p.m.—Magnolia vs. [illegible]
4 p.m.—Granny Goose vs. Montalvo

The Openers are expected to recover from their opening day loss. Jun the Titans after showed their first win over conference.

Coach Jerry Codiñera remained confident that the Titans would remain competitive even if his squad is composed mostly of rookie players.

"We have to come up with adjustments against Magnolia," said Codiñera. "Most of my players didn't get enough minutes [in our first game]. That is why [coordination] is [poor]."

Granny Goose got a big lift from JR Quiñahan, who drowned the lost recovered from his injury by scoring 14 points and handling down Cebu Slickcraft Magnolia.

Before Alex Brito, who ended up the Barbosa

Update on La Salle scandal

THE PAGCAMUNDA COMMITTEE TASKED TO probe the La Salle eligibility scandal is expected to present Ric Rodriguez to the DAWN Investigative Board on Thursday.

Rodriguez, a former La Salle player who transferred to the University of Santo Tomas after the Green Archers won the title in 2004, is the key witness in the case involving Ateneo's Mark Barroca and Tim Cone-Gallardo. Barroca and Cone-Gallardo are accused of using the ineligible Rodriguez in the Ateneo's championship run in 1984.

Rodriguez was suspended for one year by the Philippine Basketball Association (PBA) after he admitted to

N. Cotabato clobbers Valencia

ABEL KUMSAWANG CITY—THE North Cotabato lioness of Gov. Manny Pifiol took on a second-breaking 20-point third quarter to stamp Valencia Gold-en Harvest's four-game winning streak with a 90-74 rout Sunday night in a southeast division match in the NBC-sponsored basketball championships at the inaugurated provincial capitol gymnasium.

Former Cuba Warrior Eduardo Alfado A northwest 20 points, grabbed five rebounds and dished out two assists as the lioness mopped the visiting cagers of Valencia Mayor Jose Galanza Jr.

Jun Ligot and shooters Dagatan backed up Alfado with 14 and 12 points, respectively as the lioness improved their record to 3-1.

North Cotabato jumped to a 22-point lead at the end of the opening quarter. Valencia then made a valiant effort but was no figure man in the middle. The boys badly seemed to rebound from that loss."

The lioness went 5-of-10 from the three-point line (three) to fall Dolina Hawson's bid to make it three in a row in the tourney sponsored by Diamonds, Sulpicio Lines, Nestle's Spring Filtered Thai Spring Cooking Oil, Regent Food, Profit Lightings, Motherwood Prime Cement.

Jun Ligot and shooters Dagatan backed up Alfado with 14 and 12 points, respectively as the lioness improved their record to 3-1.

North Cotabato jumped to a 22-point lead at the end of the opening quarter. Valencia then made a valiant effort but was no figure man in the middle. The boys badly seemed to rebound from that loss."

Scores

N. COTABATO (90)—Alfado 20, Ligot 14, Dagatan 12, Dagatan 10, Tampos 8, Amad 8, Dagatan 6, Sitao 2, Arellano 1, Sabang 1, Abel, Dawaan 0, Ong 0, Sitao 0, Dino 0

VALENCIA (74)—Galanza 20, Jong 14, Quijano 12, Cabili 10, Sala 8, Talpalos 7, Abuard 3, Prado 1, Cosmillano 4, Dimaya, Calaquian, Canari, Quiel 0

Scores: 20-22, 40-42, 52-64, 90-74

Samsung Jungolf Tour tees off today at Club Malarayat

LIPA CITY—A THREE-WAY FIGHT AMONG Orchard, Nissan and Apollo-ido looms at the Jungolf Tour-level tournament, the opening of the Samsung Summer Circuit, now going on-line at the Mt. Malarayat Golf and Country Club here.

Nilden Nagorsol, the reigning world champion in his 12-12 years division, and his older Cyclol will be joined by veteran Lorenzo San Jose in defending the Orchard campaign against all-boys' teams from Nissan and Apollo-ido.

Ki Anderson and Carlo Legaspi will be at the helm of the Nissan kid while Glenn Sharp and Brent Samsonpong will carry the fight for Apollo-ido in the 54-hole event which serves as the official qualifier for two slots to the Master-card Asian Masters in Australia.

Also fielding teams are Wade Wash, Malarayat, Royal Mediterranean and Valley Defending champion Martha Southwoods bagged off.

Samsung and Philippine Airlines are the main sponsors of the circuit organized by the Junior Golf Foundation of the Philippines in coordination with the Federation of Golf Clubs in the Philippines. The other sponsors are DHL, Callaway, Titleist, Hikawa La Salle, Taylor-Made, Pilsen, Fung, MCCI-Air Liquid, Sportsman Golf and Michael Gay.

Cavs nip Rockets; Pacers stop 76ers

NEW YORK—LEBRON JAMES SCORED 36 points, including the go-ahead basket in overtime, as the Cleveland Cavaliers beat the Houston Rockets 104-102 for their fifth straight National Basketball Association win on Sunday.

The Cavaliers improved to 41-29 with the victory in Houston and stayed in fourth in the Eastern Conference standings, 1½ games ahead of sixth-place Chicago, with 12 games left to play.

Those numbers put Cleveland on the verge of clinching its first playoff spot since 1998, leaving Cleveland coach Mike Brown pleased with reserve his team is and how the club played Sunday.

"Being through games like this should work to help us be able to close it this right way," Brown told reporters.

"To everyone is offensively and defensively at the end it begin." Cleveland never trailed in overtime and Amare Stoudemire was tied with a lay-up with 22 seconds left, followed by a free throw after he was fouled by Eric Mobley.

Yao Ming had a chance to win the game in the dying seconds of regulation, but he lost the ball outside the lane while under heavy pressure.

Jimmy sent 0-3 against Houston in his career before the win and turned in another stellar performance just four days after hitting the game-winning basket in a 120-119 overtime win over the Cleveland Houston.

Houston led after 40-of the first three quarters, taking a 67-61 lead at the half and enjoying a three-point lead heading to the fourth quarter, but it all lost for the seventh time in its past eight games.

Jamison Jones added 22 points for the Cavs, who also got 21 points and eight rebounds from Zydrunas Ilgauskas, who did a strong job overcoming Houston's Yao Ming.

Yao had 27 points and seven rebounds to lead the Rockets, who are 32-16 in the Western Conference and appear set to miss the postseason this year.

Jacques Scotts minus 41, Houstonjets 19. Houston 85, 83 Rockets 91, Milwaukee 120, Toronto 110 (OT). Orange 69, Boston 82. Cleveland 104, Houston 102 (OT).

SOLAR Sports will air the Indiana Pacers' bustle at 8:30 a.m. today with a replay at 8 p.m.

BULLY: Texas Chandler (right) blocks a shot by Cavs's Paul Pierce. —

POC ready to admit Pilipinas Basketball

By Mary Anthony Reyes

FILIPINAS BASKETBALL IS EXPECTED TO BE admitted as the country's new cage body when the Philippine Olympic Committee general assembly convenes today.

The successor meeting at the Dimasalang Ulligan home of POC president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco will also decide the chief of mission of the RP campaign in the Asian Games in Doha, Qatar, this December and elect a new vice president to replace the resigned Mey Avila of Iloilo.

The agenda is the report of the three-man Task Force charged with toning down the criteria for the selection of the RP squad to the Asiad.

The entry of Filipinas Basketball will be recommended by the POC basketball committee which had earlier approved the organization of the new cage group by the Philippine Basketball Association and a Memorandum of Understanding forged between the POC and the world basketball federation (FIBA) last year.

The four stakeholders are the PBA, the PBL, the UAAP and the NCAA. Jerry Lim, the fifth stakeholder as president of the Basketball Association of the Philippines, abandoned the group, claiming the four adopted a non-organizational process when he failed to attend the body's fifth meeting.

The POC is expected to name chair Robert Aventajado as Asiad chief of mission with Tim Gendrano-Eller Arroyo seemingly lined up for the Philippine sports czar's post. Arroyo is the chief fund-raiser in the last two Southeast Asian Games.

Foreign-spiked cast swings into action as DHL Amateur Open golf gets going

By Manong R. Castillo

CANLUBANG, LAGUNA—THE DHL Amateur Open golf championship, last year's gathering of international flavor.

All eight members of the Singaporean national team in the last Southeast Asian Games and a host of Taiwanese found in the country will dig it out with the Philippines' best as the prestigious tournament gets off the ground today at Sanjo Cinquil North Circle.

Dave Tee Hoang spearheads the Singapore side, which was beaten badly by the gold by Team Philippines and Jayic Pagunsan in the 23rd Hole at the Country Club last December.

Pagunsan is now a pro, but a slew of RP pool members who call this course home are entered, led by rivals Jay Bayron, Benet Aranjuez and former national Jun Bertin.

Jonathan Bihan, the former winner of the Singapore Am, Junior standout Tonito Arsolo and other stars from the powerhouse manila Southwoods squad have also signed up.

The mainstays of the 3rd Alumni Stars, led by Ruben Antonio and Lonie Dimaano are also entered, likewise other heroes for Carabinga in the Philippine Airlines Invitational early this year at the National Caddies' Open pool.

Asad Abdin, Joseph Labao, Hesh Fernando, Ballino Bayron and the NCC whose two weeks ago, Adele Bolanadeo, will also vacation their stuff in one of the most important individual amateur championships in the country.

Rod and Jun Felicisimo, SPE country head Jerry Linnston and Canlubang team manager Jacqui Yulo will hit the ceremonial driver opening the tournament.

BAYSIDE: Strong challenger

Indy car racer dies

HOMESTEAD, FLORIDA—INDY CAR RACER Neil Bonnett of the Jimbird Hanes area lobster a crash during a practice session for Sunday's Florida 500. He crashed seven during the final practice leading before the first lap. Racing League racer of the season at the 1.5-mile oval in Homestead-Miami Speedway. "This is a very blood day," said Bobby Rahal, a former racer and the 86-year celebrated racer racer. AFP

Baguio rumor bugs

SPECTATOR

Al S. Mendoza

IT'S A RUMOR, BUT I'LL SAY IT JUST THE same. Rumors have a weird way of filtering into our consciousness. The realize we expose them, the better.

And what's this rumor crying out to be heard?

Camp John Hay wants to do it alone.

The rumors mill says Camp John Hay wants to stage the Hi-Ale Golf Tournament this December in Baguio all by its lonesome.

Its more Baguio Country Club, that bastion of everything paleo and proper in the City of Pines.

The more Baguio Country Club, CAH's perennial partner in hosting the Hi-Ale the last 20 years or so.

What's there.

Whereas Busted the rumor, whoever outfoxed it, must be out of his/her mind.

Whodunit?

Could it be Gen?

Well and fine if Gen did it.

There'll be egotistic trio be.

But this I can tell with conviction. Bob Ivarrapatta, the level-headed, calculating top honcho of CAH, will never allow such crap to be even tabled for boardroom discussion.

Just can't imagine it would be a reign of error under, if not downright treachery.

What's Baguio Country Club done to deserve such an insult from majesty?

To ridicule Baguio Country Club from a tournament that has become part and parcel of winning legacy is both bad tradition, it was tantamount to signing the death sentence of Hi-Ale, considered the world's biggest golf tournament, particularly here.

Clearly, let's say it not be bad, this course thus is as ugly as stalking CIBI the next decision of ex-Mayor.

Clearly, Bob, say it ain't so. I want to hear it from his own bat but you Bonet yes, drop me a note saying it isn't true?

Here and for all, let's put secret to this doubt.

* * *

TOP GEAR. My fellow Bonteriosstar, former "Sister" B. Antao, has succeeded his latest brother-in-law—Ego Gear Philippines. An automotive magazine created by Samuel Publishing, Top Gear's April issue features, among others, James Bond's first car, the Aston Martin DB5 with all its high-tech gadgets and weapons; Jay Leno's fancy, the modern-day Lamborghini Miura; and, Alejo Pare's most talked about asset these days—her Trim. Nissan Patrol, that is. The new Toyota Perrita is on the cover of the mag's state-of-the-art magazine, which hits newsstands this week. All the best, 'bruvas!

* * *

PBA ISSUE. As I drive to my boss, Jake Jacinto's office:

I miss a chance to pass like Al Francis, PBA's indefatigable man in Hong Kong, who made the Talk 'N Text-Purefoods game on March 19 in the former Crown Colony possible, and Ricky Vargas, the TNT governor, who made my close colleagues' stay in Subic happier when it is most enjoyable one. Special mention also goes to Commissioner Rafa, whose pregame speech at the Queen Elizabeth Stadium drew cheers from one so-called "new breed" many of whom died years of by watching the then-new PBA game in Hong Kong. And finally, the right-on goes to ABC5's Bob Tuazon, Mervin Chua and Rainier Rosamonte, and Willie Marcial, Patrick Gregorio, Edwin Bautista, Chito Bautista and Imelda Alda, the KBS 5/56 broadcaster supposed cum laude at the eggbeaters and the downside-ers. And, yes, also to Wintertex de la Cruz, the ABC5 reporter who is also a fellow Bonteriosstar, my deepest gratitude for the sweet company. To you all, I say bravo!

* * *

Comments to mendoza@philstar.net

Visayas squads clash for beach volley slots

IT'S THE TSANG TSANG TSANG TSANG DRAMA for supremacy when the Boracay players of the 10th Bernice Beach Volley Championships today and tomorrow.

There are 12 men's and 11 women's teams but only the top four from each division will make it to the semis and finals of the annual summer event patronized by Bernice Ayson from 9 a.m. at the La Isla Grande/Club sand court.

Competing schools are Colegio dela Purisima Concepcion, Foundation U., Bolo Diolan College, Southwestern U., University of Cebu, University of Negros Occidental-Recoletos, University of San Agustin, University of San Carlos, University of San Jose Recoletos, University of St. La Salle Bacolod, University of the Philippines Foundation and University of the Visayas.

Southwestern U is eyeing a record fourth straight crown in the women's division. Other top bets for Carabinga in the Philippine Airlines Invitational early this year at the National Caddies' Open pool.

Asad Abdin, Joseph Labao, Hesh Fernando, Ballino Bayron and the NCC whose two weeks ago, Adele Bolanadeo, will also vacation their stuff in one of the most important individual amateur championships in the country.

Rod and Jun Felicisimo, SPE country head Jerry Linnston and Canlubang team manager Jacqui Yulo will hit the ceremonial driver opening the tournament.

SPORTSWATCH

Compton launches Nike Elite cage camp

LOOKING TO CONTINUE ITS TIME HONORED QUEST TO REGAIN ITS LOST? standing as Asian basketball, PBL duo Sam Compton and Jeffrey Cariaso launched the Nike Elite Basketball Camp, a unique grassroots development program for high school hopes. Under the program, 30 players from Metro Manila aged 14 to 16 will get the chance to further hone their skills in all-encompassing camp setting. Apart of Bernie Bustamante & Associates, Elite camp will be manned by elite basketers, the 30 players will be housed for 10 days at Hotel Orchard. 32 amateur players will get personalized training, one trainer will be assigned to every five campers/participants. "The Philippines was the best in Asia for a long time," said Compton. Bernie's assistant director, in a press briefing yesterday at the Manila Hotel. And for us to finally be able to bring back the glory days of Philippine basketball by re-establishing ourselves as the best in Asia, we have to start with players like these. Training sessions will feature Nike coach Tim Grant and Rick Celebre, among others.

Magsaysay, Del Mundo gain junior q'finals

PETER MAGSAYSAY AND ANGEL DEL MUNDO DOMINATED THEIR OPPONENTS TWO in different locations Sunday to reach the quarterfinals round in boys' singles of the PVC Open Junior Championships at Old Manila Hotel in this weekend. The 13-year-old Magsaysay ousted Emmanuel Rubio, 21-17, 21-16, under the sun-side court scoring system. Meanwhile, Del Mundo, playing for the Manila Tennis Club at the Rizal Memorial Tennis Center in the quarterfinals of this event represented by Alfa Philippines on May 28 at SM City Pasay. Del Mundo is trying to regain his title in Saturday's 21-15, 21-18. Philip Ricardo survived teammate Jefferson Palmeras, 21-16, 19-21, 21-17, as a day-stalled with closely fought matches among the country's top students at the 14-under division in other matches, Marlon Bautista defeated Jayson Gomez, 21-13, 21-18, 21-19; Ryo Hidenaga II defeat Jason Bernal, 21-9, 19-21, 21-19; Lawrence Gabriel Kwan-Hagbenag, 21-16, 21-14; Bibbo Angelo d. Mark Pasamba, 21-14, 19-21, 21-14; Ronaldo Sumabat d. Jake Mandal, 21-9, 21-9.

60-fight roster today at Sta. Ana

THE FIRST 2-CODE DERBY TWO-YEAR-OLD MAIDEN RACE CONFIT stables today, with 60 are numbers on tap at the A.P. Reyes Avenue in Makati City. A guaranteed prize of P150,000 is at stake, and pit manager Dolores Flores reports something hot. Jim Reigns, Jerby has a P5,000 Another 5-code event tonight at April 11, with Ricky Sarcasm at hand. The regular "Kristine Nite Gran Classic Sakura" of Sta. Ana Cockpit is scheduled this Saturday. For inquiries, call 890-1831 or 890-3455.

RACING TIPS BY TOP CHOICE

Maria, Amelie hurdle rivals

MIAMI—MARIA SHARAPOVA saved eight set points before finally grinding out a 6-2 7-6 third-round victory over Elena Likhovtseva at the Nasdaq-100 Open on Sunday.

By contrast, Amelie Mauresmo romped to her true Frenchwoman Marion Bartoli for the third time with an 6-0, 6-0 win.

Top seed Mauresmo now plays 14th-seeded Jelena Jankovic, who beat Ukrainian Alona Bondarenko 6-2 7-6 (7-3).

In the men's draw, third seed David Nalbandian of Argentina beat Czech Tomas Berdych 6-7 6-3 6-3 to reach the fourth round. Russia's Nikolay Davydenko also advanced. Reuters

GMU stuns Connecticut, enters NCAA Final Four

NASHVILLE—GEORGE MASON rewarded its astonishing run in the 68 National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) basketball tournament here Sunday with its 86-84 over-time upset of top-seed Connecticut.

The victory lifted the Patriots, a controversial invited selection to the field of 68, into a national championship semi-final Saturday at Indianapolis against Florida, which defeated Villanova 73-42 Sunday.

If George Mason can continue the Cinderella dance through the top US college sports, the school would play for a national championship on April 3 against either the University of California of Los Angeles (UCLA) or Louisiana State.

Its feisty second 20 years to lead five George Mason players in double figures to the Patriots, on 11/8 rated, first-time five-seeded team to reach the "Final Four" since Louisiana State did so in 1986 in an 11/8 seed.

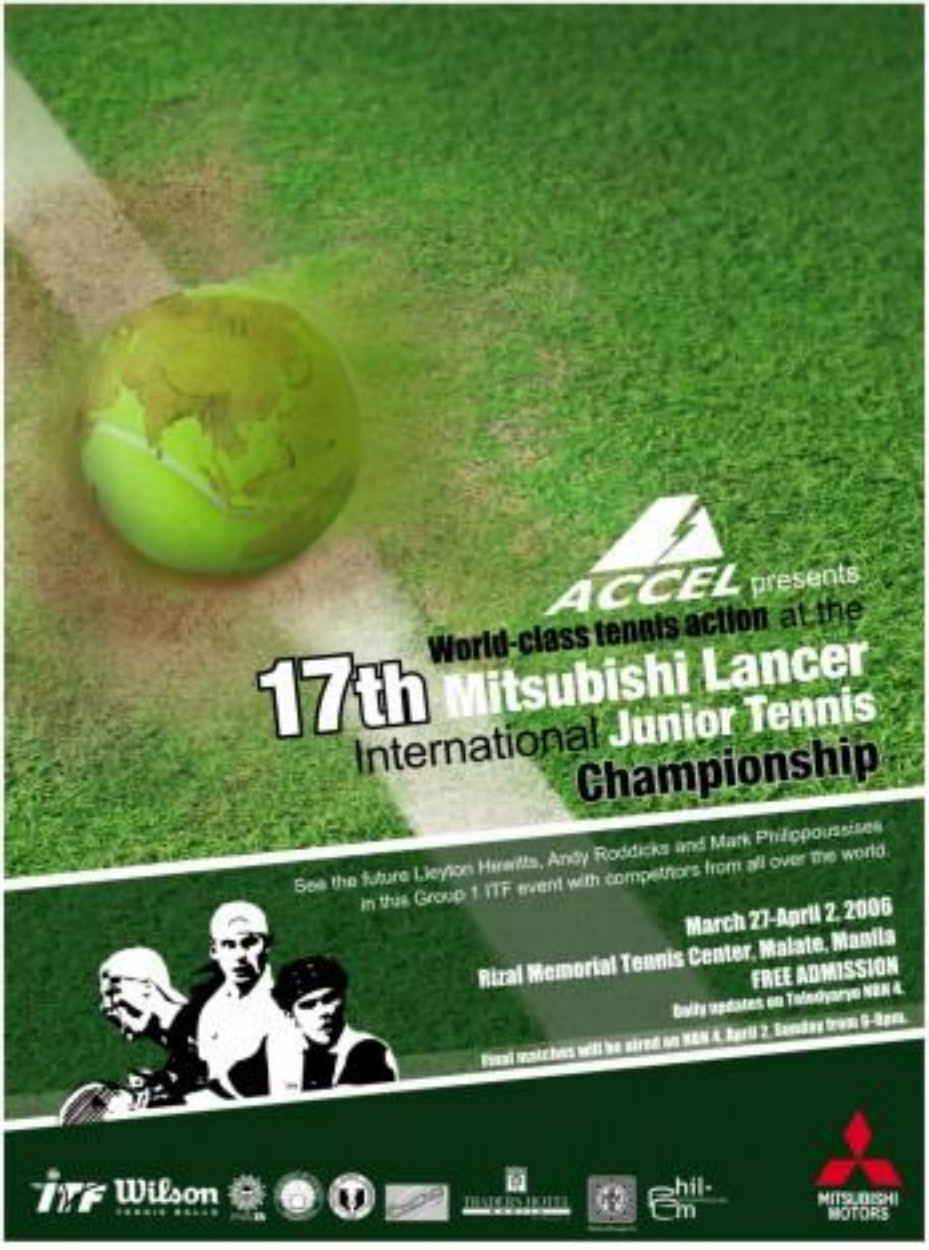
Next in the Patriots' path is Florida. This will be the first time since 1980 that all four top-seeded teams failed to advance from the regionals into the "Final Four." AFP

Ames wins, takes vacation

AMES

PONTE VEDRA BEACH, FLORIDA—Canada's Stephen Ames fired a stunning 67 here Sunday to win the PGA Players Championship then pulled another shocker by saying he will skip the Masters for a family vacation.

Ames went five under par, the low score of the final round, to defeat South African runner-up Retief Goosen by six strokes and captain the biggest victory of his career with a 72-hole total of 14-under par 274. AFP



POSTBOT BY BILL AMEND

A LITPIX BY JOSS ABRERA

MARVIN BY TOM ARMSTRONG

PUGAD BABOY BY NIK JUNIOR

BABY BLUES BY JERRY SCOTT

HUTTS BY PATRICK MCDONNELL

ATOMIC AND NEBOY BY LYRA GARCELLANO

DIVINE COMEDY BY STEVEN PANALIGAN

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCES DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY! You have amazing, fiercely upbeat disposition. People like to be in your company. Your interest in historical period of masterpiece. You're extremely talkative and very group of interesting and others. In your work, you're hardworking and super-focused on whatever you do. You wait for permanent with an important choice this year. Choose wisely.

Birthdates of: Nina Vaughn, actor; Ava Brossard, actor; Julia McGuire, singer.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): The passion and energy you have today. For whatever reason, you feel intensely anxious about something. Don't make a big deal, but it's there. That could mean you see something you'll have regrets.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): You might be in the mood for a powerful ally, really looking for think positive. By the end of the day, you are the powerful person who inspires someone else in a very memorable way.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): Avoid overindulgence with sweets. Your figures this morning. It's not worth it. Maybe will dip to dessert and settle in their course. Disagreements with friends.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Unexpected about politics and will be powerful who really helpful. Don't hesitate to ask for help. Believe in keep the friendship that to make an making your point. Don't you agree?

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): Avoid temptation by being aware of your emotional reactions to anything. One you share with someone else. Your family members convinced about something and the rumors change your mind.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Is there someone with more friends and more money to help you? Your focus will be on quickly organizing your day. There's because you don't look a bit like under the collar. Now, people see as a "loner is off" mood. Bouquet.)

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): You have an understanding with someone in your professional relationship. Encourage have big ideas about how to improve your family. Sometimes a plan is not.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): Pursue your interests with someone who is very sensitive. Don't be too hasty. It's an easy to forget that you were with everyone a recommended or for.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Quiet you. Your creative energies will focus down this morning or even just a short walk. Don't be afraid to take a deep breath. Be sensitive to traits. (This editor or anything.)

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): Your determination is getting you. Today you even more than usual. Don't be afraid to open with you. Is this really necessary? Enough in.)

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Avoid arguments about money and possessions, especially this morning. People feel very strongly motivated to see someone in an unusual way. Who could this be?

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): You love to socialize, but you should do something this time long. Don't let it make you feel like you have to spend someone in your care. (Have to give you also.)

DAILY CROSSWORD

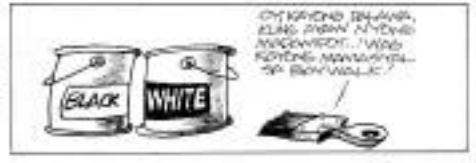
ACROSS
1 Not as a matter
4 Trade down
10 Settle deal
14 Harry Rogers
15 Pro's foil
16 Unfamiliar deal
17 Hard to see
18 Duffle bag's feature
19 Sandwich variety
21 Let follow up
22 Can groups
23 Ship's pole
24 ___ volcano
25 Mammography
26 Lacking sufficient
27 Cable choice
28 Leader of the Argonauts
29 Cultivate opening
30 Ancient Italic community
34 Tactical
35 Location of tone
36 Cable
37 Hollywood gal
38 Hammerhead features
40 Bell ringing
41 Straight as an
42 Hard to find
43 Cartoonist Hoest
44 Unfamiliar road
45 Transatlantic flight
46 Ski center
47 Sandwich meat
48 Cable

DOWN
1 Sincerely
2 Cause for
3 Not fettered
4 Whippersnapper
5 ___ apple pie
6 Mechanical magic
7 ___ University
8 Beginner
9 Hard to find
10 Freezer material
11 Old style
relaxation
12 Fine kitchen
13 Cable's transfer
14 Talent
15 Nasty shot
20 Pasta
21 Analytical
22 Cable
24 Brief rest
appointment
25 Sandwich
26 Cable
27 Disappointing
ignition
28 Tennis Carnival
29 Cable's source
30 Cable cashier
31 Cable
32 Holidays
33 Copy of library
34 Cable's device
35 Speech buffs
37 Flexibility
38 Hammerhead
41 Bit of
woodworking
42 Energy-giver
43 Fresh quarters
44 Cable

Monday's Puzzle Solved

LOVEKNOTS BY ELIZABETH CHONG-LI

TULDOK BY RAFLAND "BEHUM MUAMBING"



BEAU BY DANIEL SHELTON

KIKO MACHINE BY MANO ABRERA

ENTERTAINMENT

Lito Zulueta & Yolanda

Who is Pepot Superstar?

DJ AM Castillon in "Pepot Superstar," as a boy who yearns to be in the movies.

By Bayani San Diego Jr.

DIGITAL FEATURES CONSTITUTED 40 PERCENT of the Philippine movie industry's output in 2005.

This was disclosed to Business Inquirer by Philip Cheah, festival director of the 19th Singapore International Film Festival (SIFF), running from April 13 to 23.

Cheah, a key consultant to last year's Cinemalaya Film Festival, put together a special section on "New Philippine Digital Cinema" for the SIFF.

Included in the 80 program are Cinemalaya winners, producer Orly Ilacad and other indie works.

"Mano Mano" was other Southeast Asian country like Philippines has embraced the digital format in the cinemas," Chea wrote in his e-mail. "Why else but Filipinos born mark digital stars like Lav Diaz's "Evolution of a Filipino Family" and "Hesusulit"? Why else but Filipinos have ma economically to be digital feature in the pa that they have produced over 20 digital features or 40 percent of the annual output last year?"

Re-energized

Cheah told INP she was is "re-energized by achievements and enthusiasm across the board"—exemplified like Joko Torres, Joyce Bernal and others in between and veterans like Chokoladin del Mundo, Rambo and Dina. And Cheah, "The content of Filipino cinema is extremely varied."

In the festival's sele ries, organizers dubbed this vampire drama-ing "a digital revolution."

"2005 was really a watershed year for Philippine cinema," Cheah noted. "It's [unprecedented but] a whole community. On something said the level of sharing an unanswering."

He explained that the festival is "curious about the isolation of Southeast Asian cinema within Southeast Asia.

"A decade ago, we paid tribute to the iconoclast Philippine directors with retrospectives of the works of Ishmael Bernal and Lamberto Avellana. But not after [it's] left new breath."

Among the 16 Filipino digital films to be shown at SIFF are Avellana's "Anak Dalita"; Gutierrezhaye movies like Ben Hur "Blood Bank," Joel Ruiz's "Emerency," digital Auteur Bernardo's "Relasi," Lav Manalo's "Pepot Artista" and Adolfo(n)'s "Boundary"; Dennis Marasigan's "Sa Kanto Datarata Road" from Tanuan One; Martin's "Dekada" ; Ishmael Bernal, latest release at the 2004 Cinemalaya

Of RP's 2005 movie output, 40 percent was digital

and "I Have Film about the Indie Renewal"; Avellana's "Iram Ishlove" and "House of Sing"; Dennis E. Jr.Imbuido's "Tanodbaki"; Joyce "Toto-Toto Torre"; Jhoel Jerusalem's "Tatsuli"; Ely Chaves's "Patid"; and Glodi's "Hesusulit." Three BF films are in competition: "Pepot," "Isda Dalisod" and "Toto Toto."

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3 GLORY ROAD
4 V FOR VENDETTA
5 ULTRAVIOLET
6 SHE'S THE MAN
7 CO-ED SCANDAL
8 CASANOVA
9 HOSTEL
10 BROKEBACK MOUNTAIN

ERMITA

1 NANNY MCPHEE
2 HOSTEL
V FOR VENDETTA
3 ULTRAVIOLET
4 CO-ED SCANDAL
5 SHE'S THE MAN
6 NORTH COUNTRY
7 GLORY ROAD

METRO EAST

1 HOUSE OF FURY
2 NANNY MCPHEE
3 SHE'S THE MAN
4 V FOR VENDETTA
5 HOSTEL
6 CO-ED SCANDAL
7 GLORY ROAD
8 ULTRAVIOLET

NOVALICHES

1 ULTRAVIOLET
2 GLORY ROAD
3 HOSTEL
4 V FOR VENDETTA
5 NANNY MCPHEE

CITISQUARE MALABON — PIONEER

1 HOSTEL
2 TIGER BLADE
3 RESERVE
4 RESERVE
1 NANNY MCPHEE
2 SHE'S THE MAN
3 ULTRAVIOLET
4 GLORY ROAD

STA. ROSA — LIPA

1 16 BLOCKS
2 CASANOVA
3 TIGER BLADE
4 BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE 2
1 CASANOVA
2 SYRIANA
3 SHAGGY DOG
4 DATE MOVIE

DASMARINAS — ANGELES

1 DATE MOVIE
2 TIGER BLADE
3 V FOR VENDETTA
4 THE DARK
5 SHAGGY DOG
1 SYRIANA
2 CASANOVA
3 FINAL DESTINATION 3
4 16 BLOCKS

IMUS — STARMILLS

1 GLORY ROAD
2 HOSTEL
3 V FOR VENDETTA
4 HOUSE OF FURY
1 TIGER BLADE
2 MURDER
3 SHAGGY DOG
4 V FOR VENDETTA
5 SYRIANA
6 THE DARK

BACOLOD — ILOILO

1 16 BLOCKS
2 DATE MOVIE
3 CASANOVA
4 DOA
5 PRIDE AND PREJUDICE
6 V FOR VENDETTA
1 V FOR VENDETTA
2 SHAGGY DOG
3 DATE MOVIE
4 PRIDE AND PREJUDICE
5 SYRIANA

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SHE'S THE MAN	HOSTEL		

MALL CINEMAS

1	V FOR VENDETTA	2	ULTRAVIOLET	3	NANNY MCPHEE
4	HOSTEL	5	THE FEARLESS		

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A2Z

ROUNDUP

They're back

BAT ROMANS John Leguizamo and Dennis Leary have lent their voices to Manny, Sid and Diego in "Ice Age 2: The Meltdown."

"I love Manny as a character and I love playing him," said Romano of the "very intelligent with a big chip on his shoulder and a high sense."

Leguizamo was eager to lend new layers of life. "So much is spoken, so he makes an eyebrow," the actor said. "That's his quest."

No guarantees

WELLINGTON, New Zealand—After New Zealand movie specialists grabbed an Oscar at the 78th Academy Awards in Los Angeles, five-time winner Richard Taylor said the awards do not guarantee lavish offers of work.

Taylor, head of Wellington's renowned digital special effects house Weta Workshop, won the Oscar for Best Visual Effects, along with Joe Letteri, for "King Kong."

"We still have to hustle for business along with everyone else," Taylor said. "Weta has to compete for the work like every freelance company, just to scrape effective bid and do so in credibly high-quality job is ... demonstrate we are worthy of the next job." AP

Jobs TV

LOOKING FOR a job? Try tuning in to "Job TV," a new half-hour show that airs at 6 a.m. Saturdays on Studio 23.

The show is produced by Ria Tanjuaco-Teh. It has eight segments, which include: "On the Job," a successful person's typical workday; "Corporate Ladder," in which a Kawayan Co leader is customer care, human resources and billing; assistant human resources administrator explains what it takes to succeed; "Boss Book"; "Classifieds," a listing of job fairs and relevant workshops and seminars; and "Freelance," which features people in advertising, peripheral or alternative fields. "Job Department," on the latest projects; and "Job Deals," about or job expos in career job-related queries from viewers.

Star power no longer reigns supreme

FOR DECADES, LURKED OF GOOD MOVIES have bounded the star-oriented throne of the mainstream film industry. Since fans watched films for the actors who appeared in them, stars held too much power and inordinately affected the quality of the movies they agreed to act in.

Many films were tailor-made to suit the stars' plus points and limitations, so variety and originality suffered.

A number of major stars were afraid to take risks, so they pretty much played more variations on their signature screen personas throughout their predictable careers.

Film bulls sought to diminish star power and give greater weight to script and direction, but few wouldn't let go of their fixation on their screen idols.

Some 10 years ago, the situation began to change on its own. Moviegoers finally got bored with the predictable, star-oriented films they being thrusted out for them, and manifested their waning allegiance to A-list imports.

Local stars made things worse by arrogantly signing their documents in terms of hefty fees and increased control over productions. In particular, action superstars irked producers of by asking for cost per millions as recompense for their work at school, but additional millions for line-producing their movies.

Turnaround

THEY also insisted on the right to approve co-workers, from creators to director. Films their films bombed at the box office, parroted producers refused to offer them new projects. Thus, the action superstars had to make do with cutting on TV movies, as they're doing to this day.

Less than only a few Filipino movies are being made, producers are much less willing to pay top money to stars who can no longer be relied on to come up with hits.

Producers are also responding to moviegoers' call for better film concepts and better production values. Instead of spending most of their money on inflated star salaries, they're betting on more original stories and solid technical plus points to interest viewers, not just locally but to other filmmakers as well.

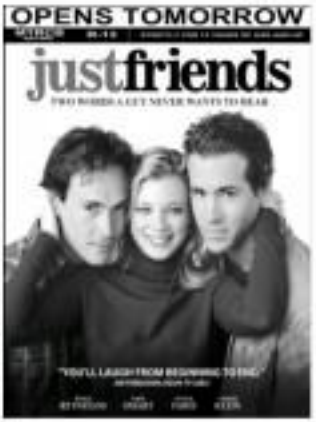
Where does that leave the stars? Many of them take on TV work. But the film industry still needs stars, so stars are not being developed, mainly for two reasons. Instinctively, these new stars don't rate the inflated salary less than older lead players charged years ago.

With some exceptions, local filmmaking has become a budget, savvy activity and star power no longer reigns supreme. Movie actors must now share the limelight with other aspects of production, and that makes for a healthier and more creative film climate all around.

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

This makes for a healthier, more creative film climate all around



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NORTH COUNTRY

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GLORY ROAD
NORTH COUNTRY
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UNDERCLASS MAN
SHAGGY DOG
BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE

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THE DARK
V FOR VENDETTA
GLORY ROAD
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NANNY MCPHEE
FEARLESS
FINAL DESTINATION 3
CLOSE TO YOU
SHAGGY DOG

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V FOR VENDETTA
NANNY MCPHEE
FINAL DESTINATION 3
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FEARLESS
GLORY ROAD
16 BLOCKS
NORTH COUNTRY
SHAGGY DOG

SM CITY MASINAG

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THE DARK
V FOR VENDETTA

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V FOR VENDETTA
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GLORY ROAD
NANNY MCPHEE

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V FOR VENDETTA
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NANNY MCPHEE
16 BLOCKS
SHAGGY DOG
FEARLESS
BIG MOMMA'S HOUSE
FINAL DESTINATION 3
THE DARK
NORTH COUNTRY

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'Labo-labo' love

OVER A THOUSAND WOMEN PARTICIPATED in the successful staging of the very first Women on Action! All Women's Run on Sunday, March 19, in the Bonifacio Global City in Taguig. The 3-kilometer and 10-km walk/run event was led by my "pa" Senator Pia Cayetano and participated in by some 1,200 women from all over Metro Manila. More than just a sporting event, it raised public awareness on diseases which primarily affect women, particularly breast and cervical cancers, and advocated the prevention of violence against women and children.

Celebrity couples Bernie Ricketts and wife Maria Anthony Pangilinan and Mark and Lana were among those who joined that day's run.

Dolly Jane Carvajal

Thrilling

Speaking of this, her equally brilliant brother Derek Linn Cayetano happens to be the boyfriend of ONE housemate Monica Gonzalez. Television sets were tuned and thrilled when he greeted Monica on her birthday with effervescent display that likened the fireworks display that illuminated the Bonifacio Global City skies. Romance was just kept flowing. But it is true that Linn could no longer stand watching Bb housemate of Monica's attentiveness to Zanjo Mercado, so he flew to Davao for a change of scenery! My reason was that Linn's ex-girlfriend is my model-friend(ster) is based in the City of Light. Sometimes it takes an old flame to help keep the fire burning in your current relationship. Hopefully, when Monica is out of the BB house, her heart will find its way back home to Linn.

Tug of war

Still on the tug of war between love and jealousy that no couple is exempt from, Andy from Kanlaon boyfriend Ryan Agoncillo didn't take Philip Pascual's statement ("I hope I'm not causing trouble between Andrea & Ryan") too well.

Andy said that he intends to put Pride in his place—or words to that effect. Philip meant no harm. He was just trying to put an end to accusations that his love interest (with Andy) is their visionary's. "In Filing Me," might be signaling Ryan. I know Ryan to be a perfect gentleman but love can make even the most sensible person act like an idiot. Matters are even aggravated for those big couples. Celebs' guilty lovers' quarrels have into a word war on TV. They become more than just love triangles, with the many angles that those lily trades throw put into them!

New romance

Could romance be brewing between LJ Reyes and Alfred Vargas? Tony have denied this but my spy insists that the Kapuso stars are more likely to become "magkapuso" soon. They must have their own reasons for maintaining so hush-hush. Alfred has been overcome with Miss Universe protect. As for Alfred, he's unwaveringly linked to this or that actress or model. A look like him must remain unattached to maximize his "bachelor value." But the more you try to hide love, the more it shows! So I always say in a "smart love," if the feeling is mutual, shame on us!

Free of Freestyle

Top Scorer in the latest addition to the "MAP" "M" family. Kapamilyan welcomes the gifted songwriter/singer with open arms. Pop sensation Freestyle now has a brand new career...but now he is free of Freestyle. It was a painful but necessary decision for him to leave the band, he says. "I became disillusioned. It's like everything I worked hard for with the band was a dream. I felt betrayed. But instead of just staying down, I chose to move up so here I am. I have no bitter feelings towards Freestyle but out of deference...I'd rather that they didn't sing the songs I composed for the band."

Top seven most of Freestyle's hits, such as "No More" and "Before I Let You Go," he penned new songs for his album aptly called "Crazy In The Diamond" recently. On his own turn, Top need not worry about Freestyle crossing his style.

Mall tour

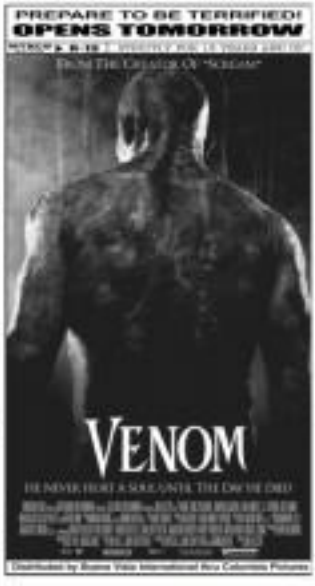
Boomgate's "Greatest Hits 2006" album has hit platinum status. To thank their fans, the band will go on a Metro Manila mall tour: March 29 at St. Francis Square, Ortigas; March 31, Market Market; April 1, SM Consequent; April 7, Edsa Star Mall; April 9, SM North; Nov. 1st Riverside at Pampanga's Clarkview. Boom is the coming MTV Asia Awards 2006 on www.mtvasiaawards.com.

Whoops!

Whoops, a clothing apparel boutique known for kinky/stylish clothes, made its 7th year mark "Whoops Battle of the Bands: A Music and Fashion Clash."

The event coincided with the launch of the boutique's image models Nicole Hernandez and Gabriel Valenciano. Entry forms are available at any Whoops branch (Megamall, Glorietta 2, Sta Lucia Centre).

FOR FEEDBACK E-MAIL: evangelyn_evangelista@yahoo.com



FEEDBACK

I'm Filipino

Twin three-year-old sons Burke Strike (brother of Cheryl Burke) of Daly City, California

Natalie Cruz, herself told it to her own words: Cheryl Burke and Melody have "Filipino roots." That's what makes them Filipino and no one can take that away from them. I am absolutely proud of my Filipino accomplishment.

BUSINESS

Editor Raul D. Marcelo • Associate Editor Cecrie S. Montano
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Call center boom picks up steam

NEW CALL CENTER FACILITY President Macapagal-Arroyo graces the inauguration of the new Business Process Outsourcing facility of New York-based Sutherland Global Services as the Export Bank Plaza, Makati City. With her President are (from left) Trade Secretary Peter Favila, Sutherland Global Services chair and CEO Dilip R. Vellodi, and SGS chief technology officer Prem Phanse. STORY

eTelecare hiring 3,000; gov't to train 100,000

By Dodeni L. Lukan and Christine O. Avendaño

THE CALL CENTER INDUSTRY BOOM continues to pick up steam.

Call center operator eTelecare Global Solutions will expand its operations to the United States and the Philippines and will hire as many as 3,000 additional local agents, the company's new chief said.

Speaking before reporters recently, eTelecare president and CEO John R. Merrill said the additional staff would complement the company's existing headcount in the country which already stands at 4,000 employees.

"We will grow bigger," he said.

CELL B2

T-bill rates fall across the board

By Doris C. Dumlao

TREASURY BILL RATES FELL ACROSS the board yesterday as cash-rich banks swamped the government's latest auction, bowing heavily on longer-term issues given weak economic prospects.

The Bureau of the Treasury's auction was oversubscribed, tendering P15.3 billion worth of T-bills more than five times the P3-billion offering.

The benchmark 91-day treasury bill rate, used by banks as a benchmark in setting their lending rates, averaged lower at 4.976 percent from the previous week's 5.017 percent, attracting total tenders of P12.56 billion.

The 182-day yield likewise eased to 5.105 percent from 5.073 percent, drawing total tenders of P4.81 billion. The 364-day rate also dropped to 6.71 percent from 7.103 percent, with total bids of P7.84 billion.

The government awarded in full its P3-billion offering, which consisted P1 billion each in maturities.

"The drop was exemplified in the longer tenor as manifested in eight times oversubscription in the current (issue) and five times over in its secondary (issue)," said National Treasurer Omar Cruz.

"This indicates every position near but now over the period with a good yield, pick up at the back of a positive fiscal budget outlook and inflation outlook in the second half," Cruz said.

WHAT'S INSIDE

Phisix goes to a 7-year high
Gov't may lower lending rates for traders

CURRENCIES

STOCK MARKET

Shares close lower

Filipino-Dutch firm to invest ₱66M in coco coir making venture

By Ronnel W. Domingo

A FILIPINO-DUTCH COMPANY is investing an initial P66 million in a coco coir processing venture expected to create jobs for 4,000 Filipinos here in the region.

The newly formed Cocoa Enterprises is also now banking in P.19 million in export earnings during its first year of operations, according to the Department of Trade and Industry.

A joint venture between local firm Cocobuilder Inc. and Dutch firm Cocoa Inc BV and Hans BV, the company will be exporting all of its output to the Netherlands.

Trade Secretary Peter B. Favila said the project was "very much welcome" as it would provide livelihood opportunities and distribute income to the countryside.

Under the partnership, Cocoa would produce coco coir mats that would be sent to the Netherlands for processing into coco coir mats.

In turn, the mats will be marketed in the Philippines and other Asian markets including Japan, but Favila intends to eventually produce the mats in the Philippines.

Further, the Dutch government has granted the project 40,000 euros through its Program for Cooperation with Emerging Markets, which would be used to buy equipment and fund terms-making in Bicol and Quezon communities.

The project was an offshoot of international recognition accorded to Philippine geotextile made of coco coir or coco mats.

Last year, coco mats won the Nature's Window Award at the World Expo 2005 held in Japan, the Global 100 Eco-Tech Award at the Japan Techno-Fair, and the top award of the World Challenge Competition sponsored by the British Broadcasting Corp., Royal Dutch Shell, and Renewtech.

In the World Challenge, the country was represented by Ayalan Arboretic Industries Enterprise, also known as Ecotech.

Ashdown Cocoa Products was the first to use coco coir in making geotextiles in the country and has become a major exporter of coco geotextiles.

Favila said the DTI has been helping the coco coir and its related industries to realize export potentials by stepping up its efforts to promote the export of coconut products to China.

REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION & COMMUNICATIONS
LAND TRANSPORTATION OFFICE
East Avenue, Quezon City
E-mail Address: ltomboc@lto.gov.ph • Website: www.lto.gov.ph

Invitation to Apply for Eligibility and to Bid

Republic of the Philippines

LTO DIESEL REMOVABLE VALIDATION STICKERS AND PLATE YEAR TAGS FOR 2006

"The Land Transportation Office, through the General Funds (Funds 101) intends to apply the sum of Ten Million Five Hundred Thousand (P10,500,000.00) being the Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) of payment for the supply and delivery of **2000 diesel accelerated validation stickers and plate year tags** for the use of Sentinel Head Office and Regional Offices. Bids received in excess of the ABC shall be automatically rejected at the opening.

The Land Transportation Office now invites Bids from Eligible Bidders for the items. The required delivery schedule will be indicated in the approved Contract. The description of an eligible Bidder is contained in Section II of the Bidding Documents, ITB.

Bidding will be conducted through open competitive bidding procedures pursuant to Republic Act 9184, otherwise known as "An Act Providing for the Modernization, Standardization and Regulation of the Procurement Activities of the Government Agencies, Government Owned and/or Controlled Corporations, Government Financial Institutions, State Universities and Colleges, Local Government Units and All Other Forms of Public Sector Procurement, Creating for this Purpose the Government Procurement Policy Board, Prescribing Its Powers and Functions, and for Other Purposes", also known as the Government Procurement Reform Act, and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).

Interested Bidders may obtain further information from the BAC Sub-Committee and inspect the Bidding Documents at the address given below from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

A complete set of Bidding Documents may be purchased by interested Bidders from the address below and upon payment of a non-refundable fee in the amount of Five Thousand (P5,000.00) in the form of cash. The Bidding Documents shall be received personally by the prospective Bidder or his authorized representative.

The Land Transportation Office will hold a Pre-Bid Conference open to all interested parties on March 30, 2006 at 2:00 p.m. at the LTO Library, East Avenue, Quezon City.

Bids and eligibility requirements must be delivered to the address below on or before March 31, 2006 at 2:00 P.M. All bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security in any of the following form:

Form of Security	Minimum Amount in % of Approved Budget for the Contract to be Bid
1. Cash, certified check, cashier's check, manager's check, bank draft or irrevocable letter of credit	Five percent (5%)
2. Bank guarantee	One and a half Percent (1.5%)
3. Surety bond	Two and a half Percent (2.5%)
4. Foreign government guarantee	One hundred percent (100%)

Late Bids shall not be accepted.

Bid opening shall be on April 10, 2006 at 2:00 P.M. at LTO Library, East Avenue, Quezon City. Bidders and their representatives may attend the Bidder's representatives who choose to attend at the address below.

The Land Transportation Office reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, to annul the bidding process, and to reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the affected Bidder or Bidders.

Land Transportation Office
Atty. Jenny M. Perggan – Chairman, BAC
East Avenue, Quezon City
(02) 921-1467/7 – telefax

Engr. Roberto S. Sy – Chairman, BAC Sub-Committee
Procurement Section, LTO, East Avenue, Quezon City
(02) 920-0916 – telefax

(Sgd.) ATTY. JIMMY G. PERGGAN
BAC Chairman

(PD – March 28, 2006)

Meridian staff quit en masse

Row with PLDT management sparks resignation of 40 officers

By Cesario L. Lotuaco

A CONTROVERSIAL AFFILIATE of Smart Communications Inc. was rocked by a mass resignation that saw 40 senior management and staff members leave the company yesterday.

A Smart spokesman confirmed that five senior managers and 35 research and development workers of Meridian Telekom Inc. resigned over "differences of opinion" with the company's new owners.

Smart—the main cellular phone unit of telecommunications giant PLDT—bought Meridian late last year.

The mass resignation which was revealed yesterday was spearheaded by Meridian president and CEO Rene dos Santos.

"I have left the company," he said in a telephone interview, adding that he had actually resigned on February 28 last week.

Dos Santos was said Meridian was in "very capable hands" despite his and his research and development team's departure.

PLDT and Smart chairman Manuel Pangilinan acknowledged in statements that honest differences led to the mass resignations, but declined to comment further on it.

Smart spokesman Ramon Isberto confirmed the mass resignations, saying: "There were differences of opinion on how to move forward. So they decided to leave the company."

"We simply agreed to disagree," he added.

Isberto said Reinaldo Brito has been appointed officer-in-charge to oversee the company's day-to-day operations.

Smart bought its one-fifth stake in Meridian from 49 partners in 2005 pursuant to the mandate of this year.

Meridian provides wireless broadband and data services to small and medium-scale businesses nationwide.

It operates under a legislative franchise and was issued a provisional authority to operate by the NTC.

PLASTIC CULTURE. Discarded plastic spoons and forks have become a new way of weaving traditions in Kalinga. These headbands of reshaped plastic replicate authentic beads produced by Kalinga ethnic minorities ages. These sell for ₱80 to ₱150 each. (Photo)

Hybrid rice sales in '06 seen rising

By Christine A. Caplican

LOCAL HYBRID RICE SEED PRODUCERS expect industry sales to grow by 40-50 percent this year due partly to rising demand from smallholder-farmers.

Sl. Agritech president Bienvenido Lim Bon Liong told the business that local hybrid rice seeds were in demand because these were more suited for tropical weather.

This explains growing exports to Bangladesh, Indonesia and Myanmar, among others, Lim Bon Liong said.

"We have the best hybrid rice seeds suitable for the tropical climate and this is to our advantage," Lim told the business.

He claimed that hybrid rice technology allows farmers to more than double their production from four metric tons of rice a hectare to as much as nine metric tons.

The promise of higher production has led to increasing demand for seeds from Filipino farmers.

Other producers and distributors of hybrid rice seeds, including Bayer CropScience Inc., Syngenta Philippines Inc., and Pioneer Philippines, also see rising sales of hybrid rice seeds this year.

Bayer, the third largest private sector seller of hybrid seeds, said that seeds sold this cropping season seeds could cover 90,000 hectares.

"We see a 10 to 40 percent growth in sales in 2006. Since we started in 2002, there is a steady growth in sales as more farmers shifted to hybrid rice seeds because the changing weather conditions encouraged farmers to invest in good seeds," said Philippine Bayer area manager Carlos Miguel Sapitula in a separate interview.

According to a study done by the Department of Agriculture's corporate affairs, farmers surveyed noted that the expected increase in income to P35,000 to P45,000 a hectare due to the planting of hybrid rice seeds.

The average cost of production using the rice varieties on the other hand, ranges between P19,000 to P20,000 a hectare.

The cultivation of hybrid rice seeds is expected to prop up the country's paltry production, according to the Department of Agriculture.

Call center boom picks up steam

From page B1

"The Philippine operations will continue to be at the heart of the company."

Two-thirds of the company's employees are based in Sat Philippines.

After yesterday President Macapagal-Arroyo ordered a scholarship program for 200,000 Filipinos to ensure a "continuing pool of world-class Filipino personnel" for the call centers industry.

The President made the announcement at the inauguration of the new call center facility of the Sutherland Global Services at the Export Import Plaza in Makati City.

Thanking Sutherland officials, the President said she was elated that the New York-based outsourcing firm was employing 750 Filipinos and plans to employ 750 more in the next six months.

The new, eleventh call center in operation in Makati, Libis, and Alabang, and is actively seeking for a suitable location for its fifth call center in the country.

At the same time, the company also expects an investment to rise further as demand for call center services and business process outsourcing increases in its primary North American market.

Sutherland Chairman Alan Wood Jayda predicted that the company would make as much as P9 billion in revenues that year, representing a significant jump from the P7 billion in revenues the company reported in 2005.

The eleventh officials dismissed worries about the rising level of competition in the call center industry, saying there was still a large pool of potential clients which stand to benefit from outsourcing some of their internal operations to call centers and business process outsourcing (BPO) firms.

"There are over four million call center clients in the US alone," Ayala said. "We are still very early in the industry. So let's not throw in the towel."

Meanwhile, Mr Arroyo said she has ordered the Technical Education Skills Development Authority (Tesda) to develop a scholarship program for the call center industry.

She added the government has to help in the advancement, President Arroyo said putting up buildings for a call center industry may be expensive that's would be better to just grant the scholarships to students.

Tesda Director Sergio Ople told reporters that the President has included in her office's budget from P58 million to P100 million in order to fund the call center scholarship program.

LAND BANK OF THE PHILIPPINES
1598 M. H. del Pilar cor. Dr. J. Quintos Streets, Malate, Manila
Tel. Nos. 522-09-00, 501-22-00 connecting all departments

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The Land Bank of the Philippines, through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites supplier/consultants/contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the hereunder project:

Name of Project:	Graphic Design Requirements
Brief Description:	Design & Creative rendition - services cover conceptualization, design execution, compositional artwork preparation, photography, photo direction and printing supervision of LANDBANK major collaterals
Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC):	P 7,000,000.00
Source of Funding:	LBP Funds
Contract Duration:	Calendar Year 2006 - 2008

Eligibility of prospective bidders shall be checked using a non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria. The evaluation procedure to be adopted shall be Quality Cost Based Evaluation (QCBE). Bids whose technical proposals pass the minimum technical rating score of 70 shall have its financial proposal opened and evaluated. The technical proposal shall carry 85% weight in the bid evaluation while the remaining 15% shall be based on the financial proposal.

Bidding for the above requirements is scheduled on **April 17, 2006 at 1:00PM** and pertinent Bid Documents may be obtained from the General Services Department, 20th Floor, LANDBANK Plaza, M. H. del Pilar Street corner Dr. Quintos Street, Malate, Manila **upon payment of a non-refundable fee of P1,000.00**.

Interested suppliers are requested to attend the **Pre-Bid Conference** scheduled on **April 5, 2006, 10:00 AM** at the 20th Floor, Conference Room, LANDBANK Plaza, Malate, Manila.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conference(s), Evaluation of Bids, Post Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulation (IRR).

LANDBANK reserves the right to reject any or all bids, declare the bidding a failure or waive any requirement formally received and confer an award to the bidder whose bid is the most advantageous to the Bank.

BIDS AND AWARDS COMMITTEE

(PD – March 28 & April 4, 2006)

PHOC EXPLORATION CORPORATION
PHOC

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

Transco takes over construction of 6 transmission projects worth P93.5M

By Abigail L. Ho

THE STATE-RUN NATIONAL TRANSMISSION Corp. (Transco) will take over the construction of six power transmission facilities worth P93.5 million, following its contractor's failure to complete the projects within the contract period.

Transco president and chief executive Alex Ortiz said the state firm had been "left with no option but to take over these projects" as despite several bidders and notices, Alphasonga Integrated Corp. still failed to complete the projects last year as scheduled.

Earlier in the year, Transco served Alphasonga notices of takeover to Alphasonga for three projects that were all supposed to have been completed in December 2005, exclusive of contract extension.

These are the 100-megavolt ampere (MVa) Quezon Batelec substation project, the Batelec substation expansion project, and the New Sogunoso switching station project.

Transco is also set to issue notices of takeover for the New Malolos substation project, the Malolos Switchyard Extension Towers 03 project, and the Labo substation expansion project.

Ortiz said construction works would resume as soon as a new qualified contractor is awarded the contracts for the transmission projects.

The cost to be incurred will be charged to Alphasonga's account.

MVP drops wary stance on PLDT prospects in '06

Japan's NTT Group also wants to increase its stake in RP telco

By Dwain L. Lanao and Elizabeth L. Sanchez

BUSINESS PROSPECTS FOR telecommunications giant Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co. (PLDT) have improved over the last few weeks, prompting chairman Manuel V. Pangilinan to shed some of his cautious stance about the company's 2006 earnings.

Speaking to reporters on Monday, Pangilinan described PLDT's outlook for this year as "more encouraging than a few weeks ago."

He did not specify the factors that are helping firm up the company's prospects, but disclosed that PLDT's net income, excluding gains from the continued strength of the peso against the US dollar, will show an improvement over last year's.

"Core earnings should grow," Pangilinan assured reporters and analysts.

Mrs. Pangilinan reiterated that the Nippon Telephone and Telegraph Corp. (NTT) Group, the world's largest telecommunications conglomerate, would raise its stake in PLDT to 30 percent.

Pangilinan said that the NTT Group may raise its stake to as much as 22%. But that can only happen if Piso Net is able to raise its own shareholdings in the Philippine telco giant.

Collectively, NTT, through its subsidiaries NTT Communications Inc. and mobile phone giant NTT DoCoMo, has a 14-percent stake in PLDT.

DoCoMo and NTT Communications currently hold 7 percent each.

DoCoMo earlier bought half of affiliate NTT Communications Inc.'s 14-percent stake in PLDT.

The deal, worth $2.1 billion pre, or roughly $461 million, allows NTT DoCoMo to acquire a total on PLDT's 13 members board.

Last February, Pangilinan disclosed that the company's performance in 2006 would likely be "benign" and would pale in comparison to its performance of the past three years.

PLDT earned P64.1 billion in 2005, reflecting a 22-percent increase from the P26 billion it reported for the previous period, and another record-breaking PLDT to make well P92 billion, at most.

The company's 2006 net income figure is no higher figure ever reported, in absolute terms, for a Philippine-based corporation.

Of this amount, however, about P5 billion were due to the peso's strength, in the company earns substantial foreign currency-based revenues.

Already, the strong peso has manifested itself in the company's income. Losing $ 1, although Pangilinan declined to reveal more details.

"Some gains today are because of foreign exchange gains," he said.

Planned Clark terminal attracts foreign investors

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

FOREIGN INVESTORS HAVE EXpressed their interest in building a passenger terminal in the 2,700-hectare Diosdado Macapagal International Airport (DMIA) at the Clark Special Economic Zone in Pampanga.

Bataan Development International, which belongs to Manila's ruling family, has submitted a letter of intent to build the passenger terminal, Clark Development Corp. president Antonio Aj told reporters during a recent seminar of the Economic Journalists Association of the Philippines and San Miguel Corp. held at the Holiday Inn Clark in Pampanga.

The passenger terminal is to dubbed Gateway 2015, is expected to cost $ billion, with construction to start in 2013, and is expected to have the passenger capacity by 2015.

Aj revealed that the Development of Gateway 2015 will be done in compliance with Philippine build-operate-transfer laws.

He also confirmed that a second group, made up investors from Bataan, along with Aurelio Agcaoli of AMA Computer College, has also expressed its interest in developing the terminal.

Aside from a new passenger terminal, DMIA's existing low-cost carrier passenger terminal will be expanded to accommodate two planes at the same time.

The project may require some P600 million in funding from the Manila International Airport Authority (MIAA) expected to be completed in June 2008, Aj said.

International passenger traffic at the DMIA grew by 49% percent to 54,461 passengers in December 2005, from 36,197 passengers in the same month of the previous year.

Gov't raises net worth standard for contractors

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND HIGHWAYS (DPWH) has increased the minimum net worth requirement for contractors seeking accreditation to bid for government projects.

The new net worth requirement is part of the department's efforts to weed out fly-by-night contractors and ensure that only financially capable companies are allowed to participate in government projects.

Under the new guidelines, contractors applying for accreditation for the first time must have a net worth equivalent to at least 25% of the cost of the project they intend to bid for.

Contractors seeking renewal of their accreditation must have a net worth equivalent to at least 50% of the cost of the project they intend to bid for.

Contractors applying for upgrading of their accreditation must have a net worth equivalent to at least 100% of the cost of the project they intend to bid for.

The new guidelines, which took effect on January 1, 2006, were issued by Public Works Secretary Hermogenes Ebdane Jr. in Department Order No. 146, series of 2005, which was signed on December 29, 2005.

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Globe, SingTel offer Kababayan SIM for OFWs in Singapore

IN RESPONSE TO THE COMMUNICATION needs of OFWs and their families, Globe Telecom has collaborated with Singapore-based telco provider SingTel Mobile to offer a co-branded SIM for Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in Singapore. Dubbed as the Kababayan SIM, it is the first and only SIM card in the Singaporean market to offer IDD calls and international SMS to the Philippines at local rates.

First launched in December 2004, the Kababayan SIM has gained local patronage among OFWs in Singapore. With the Kababayan SIM, IDD calls to Globe and TM (Touch Mobile) subscribers in the Philippines are now locally priced at Sing$0.22/minute, as compared to other operators' rates of Sing$0.40/minute. International SMS to Globe and TM subscribers is also offered at lower rates: only Sing$0.05 per text message, versus other operators' rate of Sing$0.15 per message.

According to SingTel's vice president for consumer marketing Thomas Yeo, "The perfect target of the company's offering is the huge untapped market segment in conjunction with its regional partners. We are pleased to keep our Filipino customers in touch with their loved ones while offering significant savings at the same time," he says. "Our collaboration with Globe Telecom has enabled us to offer an unprecedented value proposition that is truly relevant to this community."

To complement the Kababayan SIM offering in Singapore, Globe is also offering special IDD and SMS promo rates to enable its customers in the Philippines to call and text their family members in Singapore at lower cost. For Globe and TM subscribers, IDD calls to SingTel Mobile subscribers are now at a discounted rate at P7.50 per minute. So Globe subscribers, international text messages to SingTel Mobile subscribers can also be sent at the local rate of P1 per message.

In the Philippines, Globe Prepaid and TM subscribers can avail of discounts and privileges in various partner establishments by registering for complimentary in-Globe Kababayan. Globe's special services area for OFWs and their families. Information on gift certificate loans, and OFW-related events are also available through the Kababayan call/text service.

Globe chief operating officer Isidro Basay views the new project as part of an overall thrust to serve the growing OFW market segment. "This special offering is part of a bulk corporate contracting transaction to give additional value and bring families closer together through mobile communication. We envision more synergies between Globe and SingTel to help strengthen the bond between the Filipinos in Singapore and their loved ones (Cont. to Section 3, Section 3, Section 3,

PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

Phisix goes to a 7-year high

BUSINESS

Gov't may lower lending rates for traders

WB initiates effort to rebuild Mindanao

THE WORLD BANK (WB) HAS SECURED at least $12.7 million from foreign donors for a new trust fund that will be used to evaluate socio-economic recovery efforts in Mindanao's war-torn parts, as well as promote good local government throughout the country.

Phase one of the WB-administered Mindanao Trust Fund-Reconstruction and Development Program was launched yesterday in Cotabato City with the governments of Australia, Canada, New Zealand and Sweden joining the WB in contributing seed money the World Bank said in a statement.

With the MTF-RDP, the multilateral lender pools the resources of several international partners to harmonize support for Mindanao.

The grants will be used to help build the capacity of the Bangsamoro Development Agency (BDA), local government units and other service provider agencies, initiate a few projects, and establish the organizational set-up for implementation of sub-projects in conflict-torn areas on the island.

"Total funding for Phase 1 of the MTF is more than $12.7 million," said Joachim von Amsberg, WB Philippines country director. "Such funding is significant and strategic, but small compared to the overall needs. However, capacity building in Phase 1 will unlock increased national support in Phase 2 of around $50 million or more."

"Our program to turn our outlook over greater social and economic benefits that Mindanao can experience through lasting peace," von Amsberg said. "Mindanao has great potential for rapid development if different groups can begin to trust each other, find agreements, and, together, focus on the development of Mindanao, especially those areas that have been affected by armed conflict."

Several additional international partners are expected to contribute to phase 2 of the program, the WB said.

With prospects for peace between the MILF and the government significantly improving, the World Bank saw it fit to establish a multi-donor trust fund that would support post-conflict reconstruction and development. — Doris C. Dumlao

DOF rallies GFIs to aid battered exporters

By By Doris C. Dumlao

FINANCE SECRETARY MARGARITO Teves plans to rally government financial institutions (GFIs) to aid exporters who have been badly hit by the impact of the strong peso on the currency-sensitive sector.

The finance chief wants to cut down rates of loans extended to exporters.

"Even said it was possible to arrive at a gentlemen's agreement similar to the deal forged between the Bankers Association of the Philippines (BAP) and the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas (BSP) that brought about lower lending rates in the past.

"What I really want is declining interest rates more than a strong peso," Teves told reporters at a recent bankers party hosted by the Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP). "Every body is a winner in that arrangement."

In 2004, when interest rates shot up at the same time the government's fiscal deficit was ballooning, the banks decided to cut a deal with the BSP where central bank officials agreed not to charge interest higher than five percent over the prevailing 91-day Treasury bill rate.

It was said that while loan demand from the private sector had been sluggish, a regime of low interest rates could perk up their borrowing appetite.

"We're successful in continuously bringing down the deficit," he said. "That (deal) have an effect on interest rates. We hope to help exporters because what they really need is working capital.

"What we can do is start off with the GFIs. If the GFIs can do it, we will have the moral ascendancy to review this with the BAP."

Teves said GFIs, such as the Land Bank of the Philippines (LBP) and the DBP, would bring down interest rates by narrowing the spread over benchmark T-bill rates, or by bringing down their administrative costs.

"Expect lower cost borrowing at lower rate, then it could help those suffering from lower margins," Teves said.

When asked what the government is doing to ease the plight of the battered sector, Teves said: "We're trying our best to address (the exporters') concerns, but it's difficult to make promises."

Investment bank UBS said Philippine bank lending may be loosening out from post-Asian crisis depression, and could rise by 8.16 percent this year as an improved business climate perks up corporate expansion.

The crisis stems from gross growth will have to be surpassed first, as the government's fiscal reform program sets the stage for a more conducive investment climate," UBS said.

UBS said the country's loan-to-GDP ratio had jumped from 39 to 67 percent during a period of economic reform from 1992 to 1997, when foreign investment polities were liberalized. But this has fallen back to 37 percent as bad assets piled up when the Philippine Peso (PHP) broke out, compounded by liberal deficit measures over the economy.

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RELIEVING menopause symptoms /C3

LIFESTYLE
Editor Chele Bawal-Formoso

MAGBAYAD NG TAMANG BUWIS
bago ang April 17 deadline.
26 DAYS TO GO

When a woman loves a man

By Anne A. Jardines

LET'S TALK ABOUT SEX. NOT the dizzying whirlwind yarns in cheap romantic paperbacks, but a medical condition that has been whispered about in private gatherings.

While it may thwart the exercise of most seeking treatment for erectile dysfunction (ED) is dowdy on the rise (as you intended), a far greater number choose to think their desire is idiotic. According to data collected by the Asian World Pharmaceutical News in 2002, of the 152 million ED sufferers worldwide only 15-20 percent is being treated. By 2025, the number of men with ED is expected to double to 320 million.

Dubbed as the taut taboo subject on earth, ED, otherwise known as impotence, is the inability to achieve or maintain an erection hard enough for a successful penetration. Although most men experience some form of ED in their lifetime—and that is normal—a persistent ED (last longer longer than two months) needs medical attention.

Bryan, student of the ED drug Levitra (Vardenafil) launched the campaign "Tickle Up A Conversation" with model-actress Jerry Hall as ambassador. The Asia campaign that took off in Shanghai, China, aims to get the women to encourage their male partners to openly discuss ED and get professional help.

Hall, who used to be married to rock star Mick Jagger, admitted to having "run across ED" in her life. Since a man often found it hard to initiate a conversation on a delicate topic, she said it was important for a woman to be sensitive and sympathetic.

A 2005 study in Asia headed by Malaysian urologist Tit Hai Meng Tan, secretary general of the Asia Pacific Society for Impotence Research, revealed that 67 percent of the men treated were influenced by their partners to consult doctors.

"Erectile dysfunction is more than about a penis and a pill. It is symptomatic of relationship issues, underscoring sexuality and psychology," said William Fisher, The professor of psychology, obstetrics and gynecology at the University of Western Ontario, Canada was among the experts who talked at the launch.

Although sex is the most intimate physical expression of love and romance, it could be in every relationship, it is not the end all and be all. Sexual physician Dr. John Dean, secretary of the European Society for Sexual Medicine, said if ED caused misery to couples it was time to get some help.

"Men usually talk when they think the relationship is in danger," said Siegfried Meryn, medical director of the Center for Advanced Medical Education and Health Communication at the Medical University in Vienna, Austria.

Ian Eardley, a consultant urologist at St. James University Hospital Leeds, said men with ED could seek consultation as early as three months as or late as 20 years. Meryn added that on the average it took a man four years before he'd begin to look for solutions to any health-related issues.

And this is where their partners come in, "Women are the communicators experts to the family, in bed or outside," said Hall.

She encouraged women to talk with their partners. "Talk about how it makes you both feel and then go and speak to a doctor."

Model-actress Jerry Hall was in China to encourage women to talk their partners into getting help about erectile dysfunction

"If it is important to remember that ED can have a negative effect on the self-confidence of the woman, too," Jerry Hall says.

Physical causes

Kenya also cautioned: "It's not just a question of whether I want to have sex or not. ED is a symptom of a more serious medical condition."

Diabetes, cardiovascular disorders, multiple sclerosis, kidney disease, thrombosis, chronic lung and liver disease, vascular disease, neurological disease, spinal cord injury, high cholesterol, substance abuse, excessive smoking and hypertension are some of the physical causes of ED.

Some prescription drugs such as antihistamines, tranquilizers, blood pressure drugs, sleeping aids, antidepressants, pain killers and appetite suppressants can produce ED as a side effect.

Men who had a severe condition or injury to the nerves were likely to acquire ED, said Dr. Imran Jiwanny, urologist at the Asian Hospital and Medical Center in Alabang. If he is diabetic he more than double his risk.

ED is not a natural process of aging, but lifestyle choices do contribute to its occurrences. "Beef' snacks. Exercise and eat healthy to preserve your sexual functions," Jiwanny said.

The symptomatic causes of ED involve psychological problems such as stress, anxiety, fatigue and depression, or negative feelings experienced by the partner such as lack of interest or resentment.

However and psychological causes often account. Worrying over whether one can attain an erection only worsens an already established ED, no matter how mild the underconditions may be.

Although it doesn't work for everyone, the most popular treatment is oral medication.

Bayer's Levitra, according to Eardley, demonstrated 87 percent effective for successful penetration on the first attempt and subsequently succeeded 69 percent of the time during a clinical study led by Eardley and 16 in separate clinical trial led by Hall et al., results show that the minimum dosage of 10 mg produces an erection as quickly as 10 minutes following sexual stimulation, with most men achieving erection at 15 minutes.

"Ultimately sex is a very pleasurable thing. Men and women should have active sex lives for as long as they can," Hall said.

E-mail the author at aajardines@yahoo.com.ph

DR. SHOWLINE Chang, Dr. Hui Meng Tan, Dr. Ian Eardley, model-actress and Bayer's ED ambassador Jerry Hall

Promo mechanics

CHALLENGE THE BERT LOZADA Swim School (BLSS) and its instructors to coax you of your fear of water!

1. The BLSS and Philippine Daily Inquirer present you with a free lesson from swimming instructors. Here's how to join:

1. They're now open to all beginner students at Metro Manila.

2. In 500 words or less (short-haul papers double space, 1.5 spaced typewritten), tell us your most embarrassing water moment and how you think the BLSS can help you overcome your fear.

3. Cut out this promo mechanics box (photocopy not allowed) and send with your entry. Include the following information: student name, age, home and office addresses, e-mail address, occupation, mobile number and birth date.

Entries should be sent to:
BRONZE Lifestyle Promo—Rally for Greatest My Fear
Philippine Daily Inquirer Bldg.
Chino Roces Ave.
Makati City, Pilipas and Mandaluyong City, Manila
or any Speedy Courier Store

Deadline for submission of entries is March, Tuesday, April 13. Winners will be announced April 23.

4. Three winners will be chosen by a panel composed of representatives of BLSS and Manila. Each will get free swimming lessons worth BLSS' Complete Basic Beginner Swimming Program and free swimsuit and gear from Speedo.

4. The month-long swimming class will be conducted in May. Venue and exact dates will be announced further.

5. Entries may be claimed from the BLSS Marketing Department April 19-May 5. Call 887-9888 loc. 254 to 255.

Conquer your fear of water

DO YOU HAVE HYDROPHOBIA?

No we are not talking about the fear of water resulting from rabies but rather the fear of getting into a body of water—shallow or deep—like a pool, a river or the sea.

Despite the Philippines' numbering of 7,100 islands, many Filipinos have a fear of water that keeps them from learning to swim.

It is not simply because they do not want to get sunburned or to ruin a complicated "do" kept in place by a whole can of spray set.

They are simply terrified that one attempt to swim will have them sinking to the bottom like a rock.

Now the Bert Lozada Swim School (BLSS) offers a program that they are certain will make scaredy-cats take to the water like fish, or they can learn to swim.

The Confidence Booster Program (CBP) is an adult program specifically designed to help people learn and eventually overcome their fear of water. Here they hear is unopposed, learning how to swim within weeks.

The program will also improve manners as well to help people lose weight.

The program consists of 12 one-hour sessions.

BLSS noted that many people went through life feeling embarrassed about their inability to swim. Though they would enroll their children in swimming lessons and give them the encouragement, these students they themselves would not even try to learn to float.

Many developed chest phobia from swimming classes in the '60s and '70s when they were introduced to the activity by being packed into the deep end of a pool. The shallow water technique made many people reluctant to take the plunge again.

Though CBP BLSS is confident even people who had a "traumatic" experience, will be able to conquer their fear and be comfortable in the water.

What sets BLSS teach that others have not covered before? How will it succeed where others failed?

BLSS said it was because "we teach control since you have it, you are in charge yourself down on your safety. You then learn the pressure of mind to floor mechanism."

Once the learner had control of the situation, learning the skills of swimming would become natural and easy, according to BLSS. People's No. 1 goal: it said, was to feel at ease in the water, to be in control both in shallow and deep water, not just be able to do the strokes prescribed.

"What [people] learn from our classes are easy and comfortable. Once you learn how, the skills 'just come,'" BLSS assured.

CBP's aim to eliminate the reasons for fear of water—the fear of the unknown, fear of suffocation, fear of drowning.

"When you are taught in your level and your questions are answered, you have fun and will feel safe at all times. Once you are at ease in the pool, shallow and deep, you may then want to learn to swim by other strokes like the crawl, backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly," BLSS added.

In a CBP class, the instructor starts each session with an hour or so of group therapy. Students are assigned reading and homework from a study book. They sit in a circle and talk about their fears, worry, insecurities, excuses they give to avoid the water.

Classes continue dry land sessions with stepped exercises to gradually strengthen a student's confidence. BLSS said classes were fun and easy and the water in the pool used for the lessons was warm.

At the end of the 12 sessions, students are expected to:

1. Be confident in water, shallow and deep.

2. Let go of their personality feelings as a result of the increased feeling of safety anywhere in the pool and, later, in the ocean.

The lessons will also make them safer in the water whether they are alone or with family and friends.

BLSS is the only swim school in the Philippines that considers adults who have fear of water.

The Bert Lozada Swim School offers the Confidence Booster Program to turn scaredy-cats into swimmers

JUNIE Lantchang, Mabel Santos, Arnel Mariano, Rebecca Urrea and Beng Acosta

AIR FRANCE-KLM bosses Joop Lauwers, Jaerik van Dijsseldorf, chatting with Sorisi, and Bingo Bragonia

TRISH de Ocampo, Ida Bautista and Marivic Campilo

A French-Dutch 'home' opens

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Maurice Arcadio

Photos by Alex Van Hagen using Kodak EasyShare

THE CELEBRATOR, DJ Hamano, and designer Mindy Tantoco

HOT lovers: Jamie Isabelo and Jacques Chapacapas

BEYAMBOY with Marco Alcaraz and Jessi Eppersen

BUSTAN'S Martha Jacinto and sister pal, FLOTI's Dawn Magpoc

LEX LEDESMA and brilliant Shu Manners get Tina Tinio

THE AIR FRANCE-KLM has a new eye-catching home on the 16th floor of the luxurious BGC Plaza, Ayala corner 5th Ave. and 26th streets in the heart of Makati's business district. It has 26 employees from four different departments.

The new regional office for South China Sea, including Malaysia and Brunei, has Ruth Sorisi as general manager, passenger, Joop van Oijsseldorf is the new financial controller for the region.

Above is brief introduction to the tourist man by the airline's brilliant recent weapon, marketing manager Bingo Bragonia, so we got down to the business of the afternoon.

Bragonia (Bah Bah) explained that "in a sign of how the macroeconomy believes in the potential of the Philippine market, we have invested in daily, nonstop flights to cater to the consistently increasing number of passengers flying to Europe. KLM is the only carrier in the country that flies nonstop from the Philippines to Europe. Its newest state-of-the-art aircraft, Boeing 777, flies the Manila-Amsterdam route. And KLM's regular daily flights are always full."

The airline's GM added, "Our valued customers did show great confidence and support by flying Air France-KLM, thus positioning KLM as the No. 1 carrier in terms of market share from Manila to Europe."

Now come Bingo Bragonia, who explained, "By coincidence, today in this dumi you our lands for the press, we are also celebrating our year of being together, Air France/KLM Manila." He continued, "Why is KLM No. 1?" then offered the following reasons:

1. Nobody else flies nonstop...the fastest way...to Europe.

2. Best network in the market, with its France.

3. Customers get to use lap-top, make calls during the flight across the pound.

4. It's the first time in the industry that two airlines are sharing one program—the Flying Blue Card that links to our local reserve network and offers online reservations in a frequent flyer scheme.

Together, these leading airlines, KLM and Air France, are developing the best staff to deliver the best service.

This is KLM/Air France's commitment to all of us, the travelling public.

Then it was time to party. We joined the whole KLM staff and members of the super yummy spread of afternoon snacks, and wine in such there down, exuberantly entered by the one and only Ashlings... have big, well-toned-

SOUTHERN beauty Dindo Monserrat

ONE year of togetherness: Air France and KLM celebrate

PHOTO by Celine Lopez

JAIME Ramos, Michelle Cossa, Roland Rubio, Myla Morcoso, Glenna de la Cruz, Michael Sit and Emily Tagalog

JACKIE Aarnoia

INTERIOR designer Miguel Rosales

JOANNA Tan, Mitsuru Quirnan, Joan Sevanal, Ariana Alvarez, Beth Marquez

GIFFY Tantoco and actress Chai Cuerva

Via Mare, somewhere.

Check out, pulongpo, the tone of cool person Air France and KLM have lined up for the year.

For more info, do call Air France/KLM reservation office at 8871,282.

Hey, it's summer time,

Man in black

Writer, good friend and groomsman for all seasons Ed Montanano celebrated another year in his young age, blowing a single candle from his yummy cake, pulongpo.

At last year's theme for his bash was white, this year he opted for black, choosing a black-themed dinner party. He asked his pals to come in, what else? Mafia black, dahlings!

Senator Ernest, the hard-to-find Dipsea at The Fort Strip, Ed and mo's favorite Italian resto, was the setting for the get-together with his closest pals. The gals dressed in to outfits inspired by "The Godfather" movies, and the gentlemen looked like mafiosos.

Needless to say we had to kiss the "Godfather's" hajowicked pinkie as we entered.

Sultry, extremely bright beauty Mitos Nepa, the darling and live-in partner of Filipera, personally supervised the fun-filled dinner. She had the chef prepare a special menu that would please any Godfather.

In the food stilled in—there was the to-die-for Duck-filled Ravioli in Truffle Sauce, Fillet of Beef Tenderloin in Pernod Sauce with grilled vegetables (which I didn't touch). Grilled Whole Lobster in Orange Sauce served with Steamed Asparagus and Spinach, plus tons of other yummies that had most of us saying "enough" Sorisi, what's a asshoss ass all-time favorite hubby, the cool Moor in Ghardine champagne that seemed to flow endlessly!

Ito, mas ito all seasons DJ Hamano is our summer picnic, dahlings

Bejeweled

The Lozada, Mosseda and Sison Infinity...sheer luxury brands in the forefront of beauty, technology and service...have come together for another fabulous stunning collaboration. "Bejeweled."

Celebrating the launch of Shu Uemura Ebiyu and Monomby's newest must-have bauhaus, the two chic Shiseido VIP, emerging talented Cristina Obsdan Lozada-Isaba created a gorgeous limited-edition jewel-encrusted labo-bubay and Muscovy VII glosses to be unveiled tonight. The first project of its kind in the world, dahlings, the collection is exclusive to the Philippines.

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Are spirit possessions and exorcisms true?

INNER AWARENESS

Jaime I. Licauco

FRANCIS M. SAMALIANO, A 28-YEAR-old overseas Filipino engineer in Dubai, sent in a number of questions regarding spirit possession and exorcism.

He said he doubted stories of such things until he had experienced encounters with the phenomenon in 1997. His own girlfriend got possessed!

When she moved into an apartment in Angeles City, according to Francis, she fell ill and developed a high fever. Francis was with her throughout the ordeal. She woke up and, for no reason, started talking nonsense. She was telling Francis, "Your girlfriend is gone and what's left is only her body."

Francis thought she was joking or having a hallucination due to her high fever, but when he checked her temperature it was normal. When she started hurting herself and Francis, he realized something out of the ordinary was happening. He tried to stop her but he couldn't. He even slapped her face but she only laughed.

Then Francis remembered to pray the Lord's Prayer, which he learned from his Catholic schooling at the University of the Assumption in Binondo was the most powerful prayer. After a few minutes, she calmed down and became her old self again.

Francis provided the following details about his girlfriend before he encountered this questionable ordeal:

"She had a bad childhood. She was abandoned by her parents when she was around 7. Since childhood, she had suppressed herself. She was raised by her relatives. I knew deep in her heart she keeps a world of hatred for her parents."

Questions

Now here are Francis' questions:

1. Are exorcism and possession of demonic or spirits true?

2. What are the factors that make a person susceptible to such phenomena?

3. Was what happened to her connected to the new place she moved in to?

4. When she regained her true self, the felt cold and her pulse and feet were a bit numb. Did these have any connection with her ordeal? She didn't remember a single thing about what happened, not even the last time I stopped her then.

5. Is there any way to prevent such kind of experience?

6. If it happens, is there any way to stop or eject the possessing spirit?

Answers

Here are my brief answers to your questions.

1. Yes, there is such a thing as spirit possession and the process of getting rid of a negative spirit is called exorcism. From the Christian Bible viewpoint, this is also of spirit possession and exorcism. In fact, there are Christian priests trained as exorcists. It is a power or function granted by the bishop. During the medieval era, there were many stories of spirit possessions recorded by the Catholic Church.

2. Many factors make a person susceptible to possession. One is being in a place or house with negative spirits. A person who is highly negative also attracts negative entities. Another factor is a weak will. Still another is a weak physical constitution.

Sometime curiosity about those things and playing with the spirit world also can encourage possession. Persons who have multiminute tendencies or are highly sensitive to psychic forces are also prone to possession.

3. Yes, I believe the apartment your girlfriend moved into is inhabited by negative spirits, either of the dead or elementals.

4. She felt cold and numb because her mind or consciousness was dislodged forcibly by the spirit who took over her body temporarily. She was in deep trance and therefore her blood circulation slowed down. She didn't remember anything because "she wasn't there" as the possessing spirit ruled you. It took over her body.

5. Yes, it can be prevented by saying prayer words or evocation of protection, by sincere prayer and calling the higher divine entities, and by placing protective religious objects or engravings to protect against demonic possession, such as the powerful St. Benedict's Medal. One should also avoid going to places haunted or inhabited by spirits.

6. If it happens, you have to call a knowledgeable person trained in exorcism or exorcist or someone with the power to expel the negative spirit from the body of a possessed individual. Do not attempt to do the exorcism yourself because the possessing entity can transfer to you and harm you.

For inquiries on books, personal sessions and seminars on Inner Mind Development, ESP and Intuition Development, and "Meditation, Karma & Reincarnation" conducted by this writer, call 8367245, 09206886 or fax 8133890. E-mail inner-awareness_2000@yahoo.com.

BY GETTING "smart," Ara Mina is now able to show off a new figure.

OK, VICKI Belo and her star client

Smart way to lose fat

The new procedure is less invasive and menacing

By Alex Y. Vergara

DOCTOR TO THE STARS" Vicki Belo introduced recently a supposedly gentler, "smarter" and less bloody alternative to existing liposuction procedures.

Belo found a willing customer in Ara Mina. She has been itching to do Mina's arms since several years ago.

But before the stars may turn 20, finally agreed to it late last year, she did some research on the Internet. She chose SmartLipo over the traditional form of liposuction.

SmartLipo does away with the many invasive and harrowing details (a tube-like tool squirted into the flesh and works like a vacuum, siphoning excess blubber) used in the traditional procedure. Instead, it uses a form of laser called Nd:Yag, which, with the help of the latest fiber optic technology, zones in directly on unwanted subcutaneous (beneath the skin) fat.

The melted fat, in turn, is drained from the body over a period of three to four months via the person's lymphatic system. To hasten the process, a patient can opt to undergo a series of Lipodrainmassa work or on after the main procedure.

No risk

"Undergoing SmartLipo entails virtually no risks to the hands of an experienced doctor," Belo says. "Absent of light actuator guide as we work on the patient's superficial layer of fat."

Doctors have yet to find a way to get around unsightly incisions. But Dr. Belo says Belo, they're hardly noticeable compared to bigger incisions that result from the old form of liposuction.

As an added bonus, those who underwent SmartLipo reportedly experienced less bruising than those who had the traditional procedure.

Only SmartLipo (a.k.a. SmartLipo), which does away with incisions and uses instead a cocktail of chemicals to melt away fat, is less invasive. Endermasonry says Belo, results from Mocolipo are inconsistent since they're dependent on existing genetic factors.

People react differently depending on how they think their respective cell walls are," she explains. "That's why results from Mocolipo are inconsistent."

During the three-hour SmartLipo procedure, Belo, apart from numbing an her area doesn't upset some, also cupped her in her upper back or wings (the culprit behind unsightly bulges under her bra) and love handles.

"I consider Ara's honor back, which I moved and a little, my work of art," says Belo.

Shorter downtime

Mina was noticed throughout the procedure. She later felt mild to moderate pain hours after waking up. In her case, downtime was less than a day. She was up and about the next evening attending a show in Boracay.

"I experienced slight bruising during the first week," she says. "The effect on me was never a lot swollen and firm on the second and third weeks. By the end of the fourth week everything looked okay."

She didn't have to wait a month to see the results. Pictures from friends and colleagues convinced her very little after undergoing the procedure. Colleagues demanded to know her secret, while fans were surprised to find out she wasn't that heavy to pursue after all.

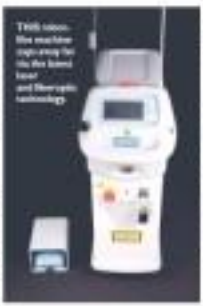
Television is to blame for this "extra bulk," Mina says, including films, never that the medium can convert by add 10 pounds easy to the elements celebrity.

With her new figure, the actress can now slip into the most skin-tight outfits with confidence. She can also wear again her old clothes, which felt a bit tight only a few months ago.

"I need to get on and off to the gym before the procedure," she says. "I haven't had the chance to go back because of my busy schedule. But now that my body has fully recovered, I really intend to exercise regularly."

Which is just as well, says Belo. Like all medical procedures in her arsenal for weight management and control, SmartLipo is no magic bullet. What it does offer a client is a fresh start as well as an incentive to eat right and work out to maintain her new body.

Email the author at avergara@inquirer.com.ph.



Trim sizes: the machine zaps away fat via the latest laser and fiberoptic technology.

ONE of the tennis players in the US Tennis Open, Kim Clijsters with Giorgio Borruso of Fila USA

Art finds place in sport

THE UNION OF ART AND sport will be showcased in Fila's main store that will open soon in the Mall of Asia in Manila.

Pinturicchi after the flagship Madison store, is aiming to exemplify what Fila calls "The fortelle sport."

Fila's store at 340 Madison Avenue, a block away from New York's Grand Central Station, has become a brand new fashion landmark in the Big Apple.

The attention seems to breathe and move on, its own, the merchandise on display stirring visitors to take on a fun, sporty lifestyle. The walls and ceiling unfolds, allows seem to flock like birds in flight.

Opened in September last year, it is the first of Fila's private retail boutique in the United States.

Italian heritage means art and sport in this design masterpiece by award-winning architect Giorgio Borruso. He explained his use of sculptured and silhouettes and interpreted shapes, saying the sense of movement became the most important element in the interior design.

Having grown up in Italy surrounded by Fila, he drew inspiration from his fondness and appreciation for the brand.

Managing director of retail Gino Pi Bloom said they wanted their customers to achieve personal fulfillment through the pursuit of sport in a deeply personal and individual way.

Fila's move into Manila hands will bring this famous Fila heritage to the country.

Meanwhile, Fila is offering discounts of up to 50 percent on shoes. The promo is available in all Fila boutiques and department stores until April 30.

FILA Philippines' sales advertising manager Ana Bisong and vice president and managing director Cris Albert with Fila models during the Madison store opening

EXERCISE OF THE WEEK

The chair

THIS YOGA-INSPIRED exercise strengthens the thighs, buttocks, lower back and ankles. It stretches and strengthens the shoulders.

Equipment:
None

Exercise technique:

1. Stand with feet together (big toes touching) and arms at your side. Inhale.

2. Exhale as you bend your knees and bring your buttocks backward as if you are about to sit on a chair while simultaneously raising your arms forward.

3. Keep on breathing while you hold for the desired length of time.

Performance tips:

1. Keep your chest lifted and your belly button slightly pulled in.

2. If your shoulders are very flexible, keep your arms upward in line with your ears.

3. Distribute your weight evenly over the front and back of your feet.

4. If you feel unstable with your feet together, take your legs slightly apart.

Repetitions:

Hold for three to five breaths.

Exercise may ease menopause symptoms

Part 2

A SURVEY ASKED WOMEN to rate their worst menopausal symptoms.

The results were: anxiety, 50 percent; hot flashes, 24 percent; mood swings, 22 percent; insomnia, 14 percent; and night sweats, 13 percent. Other inconvenient symptoms are urinary tract and urinary incontinence.

Exercise may or may not help some of these annoying symptoms. Some studies have found beneficial effects of exercise while others have found no change in symptoms.

Each woman is different. But since exercise improves many other aspects of health and well-being, working out is always to your advantage if you are a woman in midlife.

Depression, mood swings

Many studies have shown that exercise can work as well as an antidepressant for mild to moderate cases of depression and anxiety. This may be because exercise increases production of endorphins and phenylethylamine (PEA).

Endorphins are feel-good chemicals, namely, to opium. They decrease sensitivity to pain, feelings of euphoria, improve pain tolerance, and help control appetite. PEA is a natural stimulant related to amphetamines.

According to Roberta Swann of the American Council on Exercise, the mood-enhancing effect of exercise is "continuous as long as the woman is involved in a regular, consistent exercise program. If the woman exercises most days of the week at the recommended intensities, she should have relief rates on the days she doesn't exercise."

Unbalanced hormonal levels during menopause can affect serotonin, a brain chemical that influences sleep, appetite, mood and sex drive. Low levels of serotonin are associated with depression. Exercise, especially repetitive rhythmic activities like walking and aerobic dance, may help because by bulges under her bra) and love handles.

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Email the author at avergara@inquirer.com.ph.

WELL AND GOOD

Tina Arao

It increases serotonin production.

Exercise takes your mind off your problems and can make you feel like you are face those problems with confidence. If you exercise with other people, the social aspect can also lift mood and decrease anxiety.

Hot flashes

Hot flashes (during the day) or night sweats (usually during the first half of the night) is a sudden rush of heat to the head, neck and chest that produces profuse perspiration. This can sometimes be followed by a chilling sensation as the body tries to regain normal temperature.

Only 10 percent of women in countries like Japan, Mexico and Pakistan experience hot flashes compared to 60 percent of women from western countries. A diet high in phytoestrogens or plant sources of estrogen (found in more than 300 plant foods like soy, apples, and bean sprouts) may account for the low incidence of hot flashes in non-Western countries.

Increased physical activity levels may also play a role. A Swedish study found that postmenopausal women (between 52 and 54 years) who had no hot flashes were exercising 3.5 hours a week. Those who exercised less were more likely to experience the bothersome condition.

Cardiorespiratory exercise levels lead to a decrease in endorphin which, aside from enhancing mood, are also associated with temperature control. Since exercise increases endorphins, this may explain how working out can help relieve hot flashes.

Slow deep breathing may also be beneficial. A study by research psychologists found that slow abdominal breathing or "paced respiration" done twice a day reduced the frequency of hot flashes by 48 percent. According to the Mayo Clinic, slow breathing might also provide some relief if done when you feel a hot flash coming.

Memory loss

According to the website on Alternative Medicine for Menopause, "Regular exercise may also have a significant effect on our mental agility by increasing the amount of oxygen supplied to the brain. In a comparison of sedentary older women and older women who got regular exercise, after four months the exercising group improved intellectual functions in tests. This effect of exercise is particularly marked in older people."

Urinary incontinence

"Urinary stress incontinence" occurs when you sneeze, cough or laugh and urine involuntarily leaks out. It usually happens because the muscles of the pelvic floor or the muscles that surround your urinary and genital organs have become flabby with age or were previously weakened by childbirth.

Some women stop being physically active because of embarrassment when urine leaks out when they exercise.

A simple exercise called the kegel can prevent and treat stress incontinence. A kegel is performed by contracting and relaxing the pelvic floor muscles, which are similar to what you do if you want to stop the flow of urine.

Initially, try contracting for five seconds and relaxing for five. Do 10 repetitions, then increase the holding time to 10 seconds. You can also practice "quick kegels" – rapidly contracting and relaxing 20 repetitions. Do your kegels while sitting, standing or lying down.

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Erase years from your age

TO UNDERSTAND WHAT ERASES your age, you have to know what makes you age.

It is said aging today is not like the way it was for our parents. Health was, sclerosis (hin-nun) not very high. Our mothers and fathers may have undergone the typical transitions:

- menstrate 10-12 years old at 10
- wrinkles at 25-40
- dry skin, skin problems at 40
- taxol pulse at 45
- high cholesterol/hypertension at 50
- heart disease/cancer at 70
- osteoporosis/arthritis at 60

Knowing better

We don't need to go through this. And we should not. Because we know better. We know that:

- a low-fat diet can control weight gain
- avoiding the sun and using sunscreen can delay/prevent wrinkles
- brain stimulating alpha-hydroxy acids can prevent dry blotchy skin and age spots
- vegetables are loaded with anti-oxidants that the immune system depends on for strength
- exercise and resistance training prevent muscle and bone loss over the years
- meditation and relaxation can delay aging

In short, the age markers are the opposite of what we should know by now and which our parents did not know.

Designed to last

Our body is a near-perfect machine if we learn to take care of it. "The human body is designed to last 110 years," according to Ben Douglas, Ph.D., professor of anatomy at University of Mississippi Medical Center and author of "Ageless: Living Younger Longer."

So, beginning today, tell yourself you are only as old as you think or as young as you believe yourself to be. Stop telling yourself the following:

- "I'm getting old," "It's old age," "I will die soon," "I'm dying," "I'm losing my memory," "I'm losing my mind," "I will die one day so... (let me do unbearable things)."

So what... if

Our bodies experience: crow's feet, loss energy/power/drive, loss lean mass, loss of hormones, stiffness, sleeplessness, memory lapses, weak eyesight, impaired hearing, less sensitivity to taste buds, greying hair or hair thinning/loss. Despite how you feel or what you see in others, aging can be delayed. It does not have to happen too soon, too fast.

Battle plan

If you want to maintain your youthful look well into the 70s, begin now. Develop a plan to fight off the slow encroachment of age. You can:

- see your doctor
- visit a nutritionist, design an eating plan that is balanced
- work out an exercise program
- take adequate vitamin/mineral and antioxidant supplementation
- develop a social and active lifestyle, one that puts you in touch with people and life
- walk more in the moonlight than sunlight
- avoid smoking and excessive drinking
- maintain cleanliness
- avoid medicine overload, try more natural approaches to your health
- stay calm, remove the anger from your heart
- keep learning something new; this keeps both brain and mind exercised
- look on the bright side of life
- count your blessings

Anti-aging beverages

Antioxidants is best known for its immune-enhancing properties. Take it in its natural form.

Juice two peeled carrots and drink up every other day. In between, juice fruits next to its source.

There is a saying: in their youth, people sacrifice their health to make money. In their old age, they use their wealth to exercise their health.

It doesn't have to end this way. Begin a new beginning today.

Love and light!

Health and fitness with Cory L. Apel is Ayala Alabang Village Golf MEMBER.

INSIDE OUT
Cory Quirino

Chinese foot massage now available

BODY TUNE, THE ORIGINAL (08-Bsmall, now offers the popular Chinese foot massage at its newest branch at SM Valenzuela.

The unique Chinese treatment reputedly helps improve blood circulation relieving rheumatism, athlete's foot, influenza and the like; improve the body's metabolism; relieves haemorrhoids and fatigue; strengthens the body's different organs, such as the heart, liver and kidney; reinforces pain caused by diabetes, backache, gastritis, neurasthenia, high blood pressure, stiff neck, leg cramps, limb pains and the like; and relieves stress.

The Xiamen foot massage comes with an herbal foot soak, a massage of the foot's different reflexology points, and a foot scrub.

Body Tune offers a full menu of spa services, though it specializes in the traditional Thai massage that does not use oil. Other massages offered are Japanese aromatherapy, volcanic stone, Swedish, shiatsu, holistic (a combination of Swedish and shiatsu), reflexology, Thai face, hand, chair, and chair with scalp. It will soon offer Balinese foot massage.

Also available are facial treatments like the aroma facial massage, facial scrub with fresh and aromatherapy facelift. It also offers hand and foot care services like spa manicure, spa pedicure, foot spa, manicure and pedicure.

Body Tune also has branches at SM City North Edsa, SM City Sucat, SM City Bacoor, SM City Baguio, SM City Pampanga, SM City Marikina, SM City Fairview, SM City Cebu, SM Mall of Asia, SM Megamall, Market Market!, and Sucat.

OPENS TOMORROW
SPEAK • R-18

NEXT ATTRACTION

NAR on Wa'ee received the Anvil Award of Excellence for Program in Support of Advocacy. In photo are Joel D. Lavenseo, chair, 41st Anvil Awards Committee, Phi. Amylee C. Rivera de Quiros, president, Public Relations Society of the Philippines; Jordy Sytoo of Jansen Pharmaceutica, Anne Hocking of GoinoWorking, Nezza Custodio of Jansen Pharmaceutica, Jessica Amada D. Valdez, chair, Board of Jurors; Eduardo Alcaraz, 41st Anvil Awards Committee.

'War' gets award of excellence

NAR ON WAGMI received the Anvil Award of Excellence for Program in Support of Advocacy.

Jointly developed by Janssen Pharmaceutica, makers of Mebendazole Aurica, and the National Institute of Health, the award was presented during the 41st Anvil Awards.

"We on Wa'ee, the first National Conference on Intestinal Helminth Control, addressed the widespread problem of parasitic infection that has reached epidemic proportion. Some 7 out of 10 public preschoolers in the country are infected.

"Health advocates from both public and private sectors attending the meeting. Senate Committee on Health chair Pia Cayetano gave the keynote address.